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# THE BELFAST BOY



BY

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# SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF MY DEAREST MOTHER



## PROEM.

THE shady hush on an old, world-remote hill was broken by a scream-sudden, piercing, shrili: it ran through the sleepy sunny air like unexpected discord in a lullaby. A lad lying half-way down the hillside jumped ap, sped up the face of the hill, whence the sound seemed to come. immediate summit, cutting a gash in the hill-face, was a little gully full of flowing water; reaching this the lad craned his neck and looked down; standing in the rushing water was a child crying; a large straw hat, twined with poppies and dog daisies, sailed proudly down the stream, the scarlet blooms like sparks of fire in the dark, quic' water. In the child's trembling hand was grasped convulsively a spotless, beautiful rose. Her face was delicately beautiful; its natural pallor, intensified by fear, rivalled her snowy rose. Her long flaxen hair floated in the mountain air like a golden bannerette. Standing in her fear, in her innocence, in her beauty, she seemed a real angel enthralled with unexpected calamity.

The silence, the loneliness, the big bare wild hills, the extreme danger, made a rare frame for the beautiful, weeping child. The lad, looking down with anxiety in his eyes, awoke to the little girl's beauty, his heart throbbed strangely. He remained silent a second, then a sweat broke over him, a new, intense, wild sensation startled every nerve. He had no name for this queer, strange emotion; but he felt it, and never again, for evil or good, was he to be wholly without it.

"Molly," he shouted, when his voice came to him, "Molly, don't move, and I'll get ye out." The little girl started, then looking up, a dawn of joy broke over her white face. Turning, the lad ran down the hillside, through an old gate into another field, up another stretch of the hill, where the drop into the gully was slight, and waded forward.

He lifted her tenderly, and the child clung to him as it were with set affection. They knew each other well these children, reared upon these wild Ulster hillsides. As he put her down on safe land two tears fell on his brown, unwashed hand. He looked at them a second. "Don't, don't Molly," he said softly. "Thank you, Will," whispered the still trembling child. It was sedately polite; a connoisseur of good society might deem her a well-trained little blossom of humanity; not so, she was a wild flower, and flourished under the sunshine.

They sat down a moment on the hill, the boy panting, the girl solemn and still; she was thinking. Death had been near, his cold breath had blown into her face. She knew deathdeath was Heaven to the one who went away; to the one left behind blank, unutterable, unfillable blank-a loneliness that was never away. Death had taken her mamma: mamma was with God, gathering fadeless flowers, walking through the streets of pure gold. At that awful moment when she fell into the stream, and the chilly water swept round and round, that wonderful country seemed very near; that was beautiful, yet, poor little human, it shrank from the cold, cold water—the chill touch of clay.

"Will, God sent you to save me. I said to Him: 'Dear God, I don't want to drown, to leave dad and gran'dad and my pigeon, and my kitten and my honeysuckle.' Then you

came. God has ears."

"Yes." assented the lad soberly.

"Could we thank Him?"

The boy pushed his hand into his hair, he was not sure. To thank God was a serious affair. The minister, of course, could do it, but could they? They were both silent over the bigness of the idea.

"I'll tell you," said the girl at last: "We could sing."
"Ah!" he had not thought of that. He took off his old cap reverently; the little one laid down her white rose, and the two children, alone on the mountain, began the old sweet song, so dear to the young, so much dearer to the old: "The Lord is my Shepherd."

"Molly," said the boy, breaking the pause after the singing, "You go home now and get dried."

"Yes, but my hat; my lovely new hat."

"It's all right; it'll stick on the whin at the bend." "It's spoiled," whimpered Molly, "it's nearly new."
It will dry," returned the boy, hopefully.

He left her a few minutes, then returned, gaily swinging

the hat by the elastic band. Molly was pained; the hat was in sad condition, but she tried to be comforted with the thought of drying.

"I'll carry you home," murmured the boy half to himself. "Do," said the little girl, "I'm tired."

He hoisted her on his back, and away they went, out by the old gate unto the road. Up the steep brae they jogged happy in their childish glee. The deep sinking sun flushed the stretch of mountain lying before them. Long snowy streams of linen lay bleaching at the base of the hill; the sun made magic shadows on this white groundwork; not a breath was abroad; the broom and her golden beads seemed but little protuberances of the hills in the breathless hush of the autumn afternoon.

The flash past of a golden butterfly, the flutter of a bird in the hedge, the find of a big fat blackberry amused the children

on their way home.

By-and-by they drew near home; it was a common mudcabin, rising immediately on the roadside. Round the porch flourished a gorgeous honeysuckle that filled the air with perfume, and at the gable of the house, leaning over it, as if devoted to it, grew a mountain ash, its jasper leaves reflecting back the glowing sun. This ash tree and the magnificent honeysuckle were the two beautifuls about this rude habitation; its entire aspect was repulsive; neglect was written big over it; long trails of cobweb hung from the thatch; the windows were broken, odd slates, bits of rags, jags of thorn, were stuck in in place of glass. It had once been clean and whitewashed, but was now, within and without, an ever darkening grey. It was called the "Miser's" cabin, and was known for miles and miles round the country. Children stole past in fear, elderly people looked at it in disgust. The owner was known as Miser Phil and Black Tin. this latter because he cooked in a vessel certainly not white, the other because of his near-begoneness. People swore that if a fly lighted on his meal-bag he dusted its wings. lived alone except for this little girl; he was believed to be very rich; he lived as if he were very poor; nothing was spent except what kept body and soul together, and the trifle he minister's daughter extorted out of him for the child's simple clothing. This child was his granddaughter. Miser Phil had been young once, so long since that it was almost beyond

the miser's own reckoning; but he had been a hale, honest hand-loom weaver, not much given to talk; a dour, steady chap, not unlike the usual Ulster type. He was a splendid weaver, and had always in his loom the finest set that could be woven. His cloth was the best that went into that once famous place, the old Linen Hall, Belfast. Naturally close-fisted, his earnings, that were so much better than his compeers, fed his fancy for getting rich; but presently, on his way to town with his web of finest linen, he fell in with a neighbour's daughter. He loved and married her; Phil became different. Things went happily until their little son was born; then the young wife died, died before her little child's cry gladdened her heart. The shadow fell dire and deep. Phil never forgave God for snapping off his bride; nay, he cursed Him in his heart. Having had his house swept and garnished, he called back fiercer, stronger spirits than had been there hitherto. The end was worse than the beginning. Mammon altar became firmly and finally established.

The little son had grown wild and reckless; his nature flourished as the weeds do from rank neglect; there was no one to look after him, or give the lad good counsel, or example, yet people said young Phil was good-hearted, would share his last bite with anyone. He grew up, knocking about the farms around, for power-loom weaving had ruined hand-loom weaving as a livelihood, although his old father wove his web and trudged with it to the town to the last week of his life.

Young Phil became a handy, good-looking chap, with a hankering after horses. By-and-by he went to work at the Squire's, doing odd jobs about the stables. He was genial and ready, and rose step by step until he became coachman. The family were very proud of him, and sitting behind their pair of bays he was a fitting finish to their turnout. Phil was looked upon as part of the household—something that had grown upon the place and was native to it. The boy had grown up the opposite of his money-grabbing sire. He loved showy, large, liberal ways, and took them as far as wages and tips allowed; his hand was never out of his pocket. The grooms and stable helps winked and looked wise as they discussed Phil, and whispered he knew a thing or two; they at least were not surprised when Phil gave up his situation and informed his astonished master that he had turned bookmaker.

Then he dressed like a gentleman and wore a ring; the country

folk said "Black-Tin's son put on the airs of quality."

Bookmaking paid, and Phil considered himself as good as the best blood of the country when his pockets were full. In an unlucky moment he met Miss Madalina. She spoke to him in the easy, half-familiar way that was used to upper servants in those days, lamenting his loss and declaring no one could manage the horses in his way. The young man flushed, looked into her fair face and leapt the barrier of caste. She listened; she said: "Yes." Then came an elopement, a clash of scandal, a marriage ceremony. Bennett, the bookmaker, had a bride and twenty thorsand-not a dowry, but a legacy bequeathed by a deceased uncle. But Miss Madalina had for husband Black-Tin's son, her father's one-time coach-They had a splendid start and might have got along easily, but Phil's head swelled; he believed it utterly impossible to spend twenty thousand pounds; his father's hoard-for he knew there was one-would be as nothing to this magnificent sum. They lived sumptuously; the voung bookmaker, already in touch with gentlemen, adopted a few of their ways, that is, their spending ways. He was well-liked by his social superiors, that is, in their own man-circle, for he had his joke, his jolly racing songs and ready hearty ways, besides his knowledge of horse-flesh that some sporting gentlemen would have given their broad acres to possess. He was turf oracle, and much sought for. Ovster suppers, smoking-bouts, and nightly revels that lasted till the dawn was breaking, became constant items on his card, spiced with the fiercer excitement of Grand Nationals, Derbys. Epsoms, etc.

In a few years money was not so flush, presently it got scarce; to mend matters Phil's high living was telling on his health. Luck spread out her golden wings and flew away from such unwholesome company. He invariably laid on the wrong horse. Partisans began to drop; his health, they said, was hindering him in business; gradually this notion permeated his entire clientele. Friends—turf-friends, for the voung bookmaker had few others—assisted, and the wolf was kept out; but that sort of help could not continue, and before very long the wolf was in: They were penniless. The Squire never forgave his daughter for disgracing the family; he was inexorable, and swore as she made her bed she would lie on it. The girl pined and hung over her child in a love

that was frenzy, her health drooped, she lingered a few sad years, eating the bread of poverty, and drinking the bitter waters of contrition. This well-born, highly accomplished girl died really of the slow poison her own hand mixed, not that she ceased to love her husband, or he with his great brute-like devotion ceased to adore her, but gradually it was borne in upon her that there was a gap between them that could never be ignored or bridged. He could never breathe on her altitude, and she could never descend to his level. Her own perception soon told her how unkind to the young coachman had been her acceptance of his hasty proposal; she with her higher education should have known better. She died in a little house in a back street alone, with her little child and the kindly neighbours. Her husband was in the infirmary very ill, scarcely expected to recover. By-and-by his child, the wonderful little babe Madalina and he had gazed on in silent rapture as a holy mystery, was brought into the workhouse. The poor fellow felt it, and made a declaration to the doctor, who in turn submitted it to the Board. Steps were taken, but the proud, haughty old Squire, who had never lowered his head to any but his Sovereign, was firm, while the old miser, sharing in a stunted degree the horror of his class for the Union, grunted out a grudging consent, so Madalina Lyle Bennett, the beautiful, fair frail child was brought to the old mud cabin on the mountain-road.

As the children neared the cabin a white pigeon flew from under the thatch and lighted on the little girl's outstretched

"Tom, Tom, nice Tom," she cried gleefully, while the bird cooed and fussed pleasantly. "What a dear he is, Will." The lad lifted her down and looked at her stroking the bird: again that intense sensation of her beauty, of longing toward her, filled him.

"Molly," he said softly, "Give me a kiss."
She looked up at him quickly and caught his eyes.
"I don't kiss only daddy," she returned, shrinking slightly. Daddy had been to see her recently, and she was proud and happy in her memory of him. Phil had recovered under the care and attention of the infirmary, and as soon as he was able had taken the Oueen's shilling. The little girl thought him the finest, grandest daddy in the whole world: the vision of his regimentals lingered in her mind almost all her life.

"But me too," urged the boy.

She blushed furiously, and stretching out her hand allowed the bird to fly away.

"Here!" she said quickly, "I'll give you this rose; Miss

Anna gave it to me."

Miss Anna was the minister's daughter, and very kind to little Molly. The boy put her hand aside; he cared nothing for white roses; a strange, cold hand seemed to have stolen into his warm, throbbing heart. He looked earnestly into her sweet clear eyes.

"Molly, do you hate me?"

"No, I love you," she answered with a child's candour.
"Then why" —?

Her face dropped, the breeze stirred the soft flaxen hair on her brow, a sweet shyness enrapt her features; she was supremely beautiful in that moment. The boy saw it, and labouring under the first intense awakening of his heart, he bent forward and kissed her eagerly. He had his first sweet, unadulterated pulse of love.

He scampered off down the hill-road, the deep hue of health on his sunburnt cheek. He dropped down on the field again, with a satisfied glance that the sheep he was herding had not

wandered.

"Dear wee Molly," he muttered, "I'll marry you when I'm a man."

And he plunged into a boy's dreams of that grand time, "When I'm a man."



# THE BELFAST BOY.

### CHAPTER I.

"GOOD-NIGHT, Molly."

The speaker was a tall, broad-built young man, with an open, manly countenance; there was written large all over his face a straightforward uprightness that could not be mistaken. The cheery, kindly light of the eyes refined the face, and made it pleasant; soft, waving brown hair clung round the wide, broad brow. He was tall exceedingly, with great wide shoulders and the mould and muscles of a Hercules; many a lightly made young fellow envied him his splendid build. He bent down to a level with his companion, a slight, girlish figure not yet elegant with maturity, but lovely with the promise of youth. She wore a long white muslin dress that touched her feet, and clung in soft folds to her slim figure. Tied loosely round her waist was a sash of pale cerulean silk; fastened carelessly in this cestus was a spray of ivy. Her face was a picture of dreamy beauty, pale as wax, with only the suspicion of colour in the cheek-tips, like the tinting of young apple bloom. The features might have been a model for that rare "Cnidian" Venus that dazzles artists. It was a classical face; the tone of melancholy that has such a fascination in marble or in the human face lurked in the dark grey coruscant eyes. The fine Grecian nose was delicately cut, the brow low and broad, and bordered by heavy golden tresses. Such was Madalina Lyle Bennett, not the child now, but a magnificent girl, treading imperceptibly, yet at what a pace to womanhood. She was sixteen now, and had passed through much in her brief time. Miser Phil was dead; his hoardings came into his son's hands, save one old blue stocking which could not be found. Phil the younger had not found a new character in the Army; once the miser's money was in his hands he did the fine gentleman again, bought his discharge, sent his daughter to a collegiate school, and as a finish married a dashing young

milliner, and set up housekceping in the adjacent city. The young milliner was fond of ostriches—they, of course, belonged to her trade—but she had other little pet likings just as expensive and more harmful, and in a few years Phil was again on the rocks. He obtained a situation on the Queen's Island Shipbuilding Yard as storekeeper, and the family presently became fused into the dense mass of humans that crowd the narrow, unwholesome streets of the great city.

Molly was with them; enduring her existence, she suffered horribly. It galled her to see her father drunk, and the stepmother fairly often the same. She held her lips shut, and tried to hide her eyes, but the fearful vision was never absent. She was educated beyond such a circle. In early years the minister of the little church up Shankhill had looked after her a littleallowed her to attend free of charge a little school his daughter kept. Possibly he pitied her, knowing her to be of good birth on her mother's side. She had been an apt pupil, and this instruction prepared her for what followed in the collegiate school to which she was sent after the old miser's death. Miser Phil's savings could not last for ever. Molly had to leave school and its high-bred tone to mingle almost with the gutter. After this came a period of toil, drudging after the children, cleaning, cooking, mending for the whole house, getting no thanks but abuse for her pains. At last the wounded spirit rebelled; she flung away the broom rather than ever hear again her stepmother cast in her teeth-"She was eating her children's bread." Molly went out to work. She shrank from anyone who had known her, she dreaded any eye looking in on the terrible home -she might have got introductions and become a nursery governess save for this shrinking, this secret shame. As it was, she entered at once one of the two avenues open in those bygone years to lower class girls, namely, the mill or service. She chose the mill in preference to the latter. At the mill she wrought from six in the morning to six at night, paying her mother so much for board and lodging, and buying her clothing with what remained. Just now she was standing at her father's house, a small red brick one, in the middle of a long row that ran the entire length of a street which was narrow, long and dirty, and had a line of uniform houses on either side. It was painful to find Molly amid such surroundings, and in such circumstances, but such is life.

"Good-night, Molly, good-night; I wish I could persuade you for half an hour to-morrow night."

"No, Willie, I have things to do; not until Sunday night,

coming out of church."

"That means four whole evenings blank." She laughed softly, glancing into his eyes.

"I'm in earnest," he said bluntly. "The evenings are nothing without you. I wish sometimes we were children

again; we were always together then."

"Yes," returned the girl softly looking into the summer sky, and remembering their romps and plays about the old hills. The young man was looking intently upon her; syllables were framing in his lips; his heart was big with all he wished to say, yet he controlled himself. "Not yet," he whispered to himself, "not yet." He rallied himself to go.

"Then until Sunday night, good-bye."

He was vexed she put him off, but he had to take it. He loved her; ever since he was a boy it had been so; latterly, since he was becoming a man more so, his whole being yearned to her. To-night, as he stood looking at her in the pellucid dusk of the summer evening, his emotion almost overmastered him; he longed to but his arms round her, and take her with him

for ever; but he went away alone.

The girl stood in the doorway and looked after him; his tall, athletic figure loomed large in the semi-dark. He was a splendidly-made man, and to-night, looking after him, she became conscious of his love—conscious in a more decided sense than she had ever been. Her soul stood still; a vague sensation, a half-formed idea that she did not love him as he did her flitted for a moment through her brain; yet she did love him in her way, not in his. He was getting on well. Some time after we saw him herding on the hillside his people moved into town, and the lad drifted, as so many do, to the Queen's Island Shipbuilding Yard, or as it is called by the people, "The Island." Here he had run about for a while doing anything and everything; finally he had settled in the carpenters' shop. He was steady and capable, and as time wore on he was looked on as the best apprentice at his bench; day by day saw him rise in the foreman's eyes. He was punctual, regular and capable, and no working man on the Island was more thought of. By and by he became foreman.

and for a young man it was a proud position; rumours were current that other advancements were coming, and Crawford was studying at the night-school to fit himself for the future. The manager saw there was something in him, and meant to give him a chance. He was saving every penny of his wages towards a little home of his own. Other fellows would have rushed into marriage once their time was out, but Crawford wanted a nicely-furnished house for his beautiful wife, and now he was nearing steadily his long-hoped-for future.

Molly entered her father's house reluctantly; the living room, or kitchen as it is called, was immediately off the street. One glance was sufficient to show its condition; the fire was dead out, the ashes rising over the fender; the used vessels from the evening meal were still on the table. The stepmother was lying on an old settle sleeping heavily; from a small room that opened off this kitchen came the plaintive

voice of a child.

"Molly! hi, Molly!"

The girl went forward; a little one about six years sat up in the bed whimpering and half asleep; the room was stifling, the child undressed, and little streams of sweat were running down its soiled cheeks. Molly hastily opened the window and spoke kindly to the poor child.

"Molly, a drink; I want a drink."

"Yes, dear, yes: just one moment till I get off my dress."

This white muslin dress was her best, and had to be taken care of; it would have to last the whole summer. Deftly Molly threw on an old skirt and bodice, then brought the child a cup of water. She lifted her tenderly on to her knees, took off her day clothing, repeated with her her little prayer, then smoothing her pillow, put her down to sleep. Next there was the fire to light, the dirty dishes to wash, and the whole kitchen to sweep up; during this procedure the woman snored on. Presently Molly's eyes fell upon the clock. "I am late," she muttered, "I should have been there."

She turned to the door and looked out; the street was empty; usually it was full of people hanging about the doors, chatting, smoking, quarrelling, singing, nursing; but to-night not a sound, not a creature, the long narrow street with its two rows of houses facing each other was silent as a cemetery; the houses stood up darkly vivid in the summer moonlight, not a light

even was to be seen. The very street lamps were out, but that great lamp of Diana poured vivid vision on everything. There was the torn-up pavement with the little heaps of stones at the door cheeks, odd pokers, cudgels, brick-bats convenient on the curbstone. To a resident the story this told was, alas, not new, but a stranger might have marvelled.

The girl in the doorway hesitated; the opportunity was excellent; not a soul abroad, not an eye to look upon her. Ah! she forgot dozen of keen eyes were watching at those darkened windows, that old blunderbusses, rusted pistols, odd pikeheads that had lain on the top of tester-beds for genera-

tions, were all ready for onslaught or defence.

With a quick gesture, the girl turned indoors, lifted a shawl from a nail on the wall, rolled it round her head, and went out. The watchers at the windows in the immediate vicinity whispered, "Molly's away to the pub to bring her father home." Farther up the street angry questioning glances flashed through the dark open windows; farther still heavy curses were muttered, and many a hand closed upon its gun.

"A spy!" was breathed. "A spy; I'll shoot her!"

"No, no, for heaven's sake; a woman, maybe on the hunt for her man or her son Remember Dover Street!" Ha! Dover Street, where a harmless baker, coming from his night's work, was shot like a dog in mistake for a spy, and in later times a soldier and policeman, both on duty, were shot at this bloody street. But the girl rushed along unharmed, trembling in every limb. She was a Shankhill girl, used to the yell and fury of the rioters, but the silence, the queer calm, the strange, deserted appearance of the streets unstrung her as no street-tussle could have done. She hurried on to Shankhill. Shankhill is a wide, hilly road which, under various names, leads from what was formerly was one of the principal streets of the town, viz., North Street, right up to the big bare hills that loom over Belfast.

Where Molly entered it now the road was a wide, open thoroughfare, lined on either side with shops, every one of which was shut and dark, except those darker ones which had been wrecked and burned some nights agone—they gaped blacker and wilder than the rest. The same loneliness, the same awful calm was also upon the big wide, busy road. Not a soul seemed abroad, not a breath disturbed the silence or

bedewed the brilliant moonlight. Silence; fierce silence! what

so terrible, so palpable, so overwhelming.

Molly Bennett flew forward, keeping close by the houses; her knees were shaking under her, her feet seemed scarcely to touch the ground; fear drove her on. She would have given much to be at home, but back she could not face. She tore on down the road: in her excitement she passed the place of rendezvous. Through the stillness of the night hissed a whisper.

" Mol-lie!"

The girl staggered as if struck. A rude, strong arm was thrust out from round the corner of an opening alley, and drew her into the shadow. "What kept you?" said the voice.

"I—I—I'm not going," said Molly, panting.

"Not going? Why? We'll never get a chance like this."

"I got a fright," returned Molly, "coming down the road.

I feel as if it were full of ghosts."

Her companion laughed scornfully. She was a worker in the next "stand" to Molly in the mill, and had prevailed on her to make this appointment; now at its fulfilling Molly shrank.

As they stood in the alley discussing, a strange remote echo swung up the silence. They both paused, and, stepping out into the open road, looked up and down. Nothing could be seen, yet ever the nearing, regular, yet half-muffled sound could be heard. Suddenly rising over Peter's Hill appeared a batch of men, marching solid square.

"Look," cried Maggie Reilly; "it's the Catholics coming to

wreck the Shankhill."

"No. It's the soldiers," and every "No," said Molly.

vestige of colour left her face.

"We'll be arrested," said the other girl in horror. "They'll say we were carrying messages between the two parties." It was commonly reported that the women bore messages; whether it really took place is a question, but certainly the women played a part in these riots-shouting, digging stones, carrying drinks to the men, hiding them in their houses when justice dared to approach.

"What are we to do?" breathed Molly.

"We'll hide here. Perhaps they'll pass on."

They squeezed themselves into a doorway of the court in

which they stood. Here for a second they stood breathless, every instant bringing the thundering tread nearer and nearer. The very ground beneath their feet seemed to tremble as the soldiers advanced double quick. The girls held to one another. Suddenly, as the detachment covered the mouth of the court, a horseman galloped up, and in a thundering tone cried "Halt!"

Every sound ceased. The officer in command ordered his men to file up the court, and hold themselves for any emergency.

In a moment Maggie Reilly took in the situation, and stoop-

ing down quickly, took off her shoes.

"Come," she breathed, "come, we must make a dash for it." Trembling, half-fainting, yet goaded by fear, Molly plunged after her into the dark dirty back streets that twist and turn into each other in a perfect labyrinth. Breathless, panting, trembling, they held on their way until, after many turns and doubles, they issued again on to the main road, a little nearer the city. Here the thoroughfare is narrow, old; the shops dingy, and the entire locality minus the go-ahead business look visible higher up the road. A little lower down there opens into the main road two streets, one on either side, facing each other—low localities—the regions of doss-houses, thimble riggers, thieves, even of murderers. One is Millfield, with her crimes. The other, Carrick Hill, with its filth, degradation and slums.

It was toward this latter the girls headed.

#### CHAPTER II

GOING along a few steps on the right hand side of Carrick Hill, Maggie Reilly rapped at the low door of a small shop. This shop was a blind, but it was invaluable, although consisting only of snuff, sticks, coals, and in the window the modest announcement, "Lodgings."

Troublesome policemen were put out with, "Oh, that girl was after my room;" or "The young woman, sir, bought a

penn'orth of snuff."

Different policemen came and went, but the shop remained, driving a flying business Sunday and Saturday alike; well, scarcely alike, for Sunday was fair day.

"Can she tell," whispered Molly.

"Tell! Of course. I heard she knows the Black Art.

"What is that?"

"Oh, that's selling your soul to the devil for the power to read the future"

Molly shivered.

"Let us go home. Do go home."
But Maggie Reilly threw off her hand.

"What a weakling you are;" and putting up her own hand she knocked louder on the low door. The thud was rude in the surrounding stillness, and presently through the door came the shrill, rapid query, "Who's there?"

"Open," returned Maggie, "We be two girls."
"What do you want at this hour of the night?"

"Our fortunes speyed."

"None of your lies. Ye're a peerler's bribe, but I'm not on.

Do you know the soldiers are upon the streets?"

"Yes, yes," said Maggie, "But, good woman, let us in." During all this colloquy Molly had been tugging at her sleeve to get her away. "Come," she breathed, "Come."

Now the listener, long practised to eavesdropping, caught the word, and through the keyhole there came the coarse whisper, "Yes, go. It shall be the best of your play." Maggie Reilly started; her plain broad face whitened; to her uneducated, superstitious mind, the remark was not heard by sensible means. It was the first touch of the mysterious unknown; it satisfied her that the card-cutter could tell; her desire was whetted.

"Do not turn us away," she pleaded. "We be indeed two

girls.

There was a brief silence, then a muffled, cautious shuffle, next a rasping bolt was slipped, the door was opened a few inches, a very old wizened women stuck her nose forward. She surveyed them in keen silence, then opening the door wider, stuck out a skinny bare arm and pulled them in singly. The door was again as cautiously and as carefully bolted.

Inside was pitch dark, and the fearful stench of decaying vegetables was choking. Molly Bennett drew out her hand-kerchief, which was scented, Cray ford sending her a bottle

of perfume once in a while.

At a call from the old spey, a woman appeared with a light, a candle stuck in a porter bottle. Taking it out of her hand, the old woman proceeded to an old rickety stairway at the back of the shop, inviting her clientele to follow. As they advanced up this stairway they passed two men, black with soot and dirty, playing cards, a bottle of whiskey between them. They sat in a window niche, half-way up me staircase.

The apartment into which they were ushered was large and low-ceiled; the walls, the ceiling, the floor were black with smoke and dirt and age, a fire burned low in the grate, the dull red like an angry bull's eye in the candle gloom. There was no furniture. Not one stick, save a long, low form for customers, and a three-legged stool for the old spey herself. But, horror of horrors, on the dirty, blasted looking walls holy pictures of the Virgin and the Saviour were hanging.

Mrs. Green seated herself; the porter bottle with the candle on the floor between her and the girls; its pale flicker showed her withered countenance, harsh, coarse, almost fierce, with the eyes like burning coals in their sunken depths. She brought out a pack of cards from some mysterious pocket in her skirt, and shuffled them roughly, putting them into Maggie Reilly's hand; Maggie had recovered her nerve, and picked out the complement quite coolly. Maggie was no longer

young, and had a fear that time would set her on the old maid's shelf. She wanted to know-just to know-if she really would ever get a man-hence her push and determination to see the spey this very night.

The card-cutter soon relieved her mind. She was to be married, and that soon to the young man she was keeping company with. The girl flushed in pleasure and sat down

on the form, glowing.

Molly came forward to learn her future. She was almost in collapse. A secret misgiving that it was wrong was hurting her, while ever and anon from the window niche on the staircase came the sound of fearful oaths. The devil seemed about. She was trembling visibly; from her nervous fingers dropped the shawl which was round her head and face, and before the old card-cutter's blazing eyes stood a young, magnificent girl; she knew too much of life to take Molly for a common sort. She looked at her cunningly. Many a beautiful woman from high life and from low had stood under the fire of those awful eyes, but in all her vast experience no beauty had ever taken the light from her eyes until to-night.

It was with a certain interest the card-cutter held out the cards to Molly. Now the girl, shaking like a leaf, let the

whole thing drop.

The spey frowned.

"That is bad," she muttered. "Your first fortune that is within your hand shall slip away."

"Molly's large dark eyes fastened on her in anguished fear. This woman, this terrible woman that knew the future, what was she going to tell-oh, to run away, to get out-to hide from her-the lonely streets, the soldiers had no terror like the terror of this awful place, and this woman with her secrets and her eves.

As she picked out the last card, the card-cutter gave an

ugly cry, and half rose from the three-legged stool.

"Not that," she cried, "Not that!"

But Molly, terrified anew, shrank back with the forbidden card in her hand; she had drawn it out even more surely at the unexpected warning. The card-cutter looked at the cards carefully. She seemed to believe in her own divinations. A queer look came into those fiery eyes, as carefully, pointedly, she revealed the secret of unborn years.

Molly's eyes were fastened on her, and as the voice, low and guttural, proceeded, a deep scarlet flush gathered

into her white face.

"There are two men-a black man and a brown man. This black man is under the Crown; he is in high life; he is looking down at you. My girl, have nothing to do with him. There is bother—bother all round him."

"Am I right?" queried the old hag.

"I do not know," truthfully returned the girl.

The spey looked at her piercingly; her clientele always assured her she was perfectly right, but Molly told the truth. The old cutter turned again to the cards.

"This brown man," she went on shall cross the water. There is a separation between you; but he is your fate; you

will marry him; he is here."

She laid her finger on the card, her eyes on her young

listener.

"My girl, beware, beware, these men mingle continuously near the end. Beware of that black man; he is near you, very near you. He is in your heart.

Molly's lips blanched, the bright colour in her face faded; the random shot went home, the truth struck her in the face. She had laughed with the idea, played with it, but never really taken it in until this moment, when her ears rang with it.

"Beware," said the card-cutter, "This man is your evil day. The other one is your fate; he shall be very rich and

very honourable."

The old woman rose, pushed back her stool, and lifting the porter-bottle-candlestick, lighted them down the old rickety stairs, and through the shop, thrusting them out as cautiously as they had been admitted.

It was like coming into Paradise, getting into the pure night. "Thank God," breathed Molly, "Thank God."

Her heart was throbbing violently; she was keenly excited. The revelation of the spey was disturbing, and left a curious sting behind.

"What was you about a black man?" asked her companion. "It was a lot of make-up," answered Molly. "I'm glad I'm

"Well, she told me everything," returned Maggie.

They were hurrying out of Carrick Hill. Suddenly a figure

swung round the corner from the main thoroughfare—a military man, distinctly outlined in the opal darkness. He came forward leisurely, smoking a cigar, his trailing scabbard rattling on the cobble pavement.

"It's a soldier," cried Maggie in dismay. "We'll be

surely taken this time."

Molly was looking mouth and eyes; then her heart seemed to stop. She could not speak; she was terrified; she scarcely believed the approaching gentleman flesh and blood—it was something the old woman sent—something that knew her thoughts and appeared; the girl, already unstrung, turned cold as stone. She put her hand to her heart vaguely.

"He's a magistrate," continued Maggie. "I hear his

sword. Come, let us run for it."

She swung on her heel, and quick as an arrow fled away into the heart of the wretched slum. Molly, overcome, almost unconscious, feeling herself going to fall, sat down upon the payement.

The moonlight fell full upon her crouching figure. She assayed to draw her shawl over her head, but her hands fell feebly, her white chiselled face, all unhidden in its glorious youth and beauty, and surrounded by her glinting hair, rose

like a picture from the very mud.

The footsteps were nearing—light, easy, swinging steps. She heard them through her horror and stupefaction—nearer, nearer, almost up to her—lower, lower, sank that golden head, until it almost touched the very curbstone. He was close to her, stopped—looking—bending over her—was he real, really real? An! she felt his breath; it was warm, full of cigar. Yes—yes—surely flesh and blood—surely himself. He was speaking; yes, it was his voice—his own voice; she would know it amid worlds of voices. Would he know her, was it possible he would remember, would recognise her?

She had longed and prayed to see him. What a pity it was here and now. And yet, in spite of all, a gladness swept over her, a joy intense as light filled heart and soul. In spite of

every drawback she was glad.

What was he saying? She could not tell—something sweet, something like wordless music. Ah! his very accents struck

deep, sweet chords in her soul.

The gentleman was asking her to rise; he put out his hand to assist her. His touch steadied and recalled her, and slowly,

gracefully she arose into the clear white moonlight. Her golden hair, half unbound, lay like a shower of gold about her neck. One hand clasping her shawl was exposed; it was perfect, and on its finger glittered a magnificent ring-a fine chased gold ring set with rubies in the form of a heart. Crawford had given it, not as an engagement ring, but because she had seen it in a jeweller's and coveted it. It was a valuable ring, and the young man had been almost two years paying for it at so much a week out of his weekly wages. The girl loved it because of its rare beauty. She half-fancied it understood her, and her secrets and her sorrow, and its charm was unbroken by any pledge or vow. Just now its glitter caught the young officer's gaze, then his eyes went to the face. He drew back a step, partly from surprise, partly from recognition, for of course he knew her immediately. He had seen that rarely lovely face onceand had remembered.

"Miss Ben-son," he murmured, uncovering, "I beg your

pardon."

#### CHAPTER III.

THE flush upon her countenance deepened into scarlet as she stood before him.

"I hope you remember me as faithfully as I remember

you," he said gallantly.

Her drooped eyelids did not move. They had met; their meeting had been, not as Dame Grundy approves, but as young folk sometimes meet. One night some time before she had been out through the city for a walk, as luck would have it with this very girl, Maggie Reilly, and he, attracted by her beautiful face, had spoken to her on the street.

Now Molly's well-bred accents brought the blush of confusion to his brow. He apologised and gave her his card, murmuring that he had mistaken her for one of his mother's friends, and expressed the hope that he would have the happi-

ness of an introduction very soon.

Molly of course believed him; the little rencontre was over in a few seconds; but as he looked with such evident appreciation into her face, the young girl's sleeping heart awoke. He was very handsome, dark exceedingly in the eyes, with pale, aristocratic features, a high Roman nose that looked its best under his military cap; he was the tallest man in his regiment, his figure was perfect, and the pride of his corps.

As he stooped to Molly that night apologising, he asked her

name

"Good-night Miss ------ Forgive me, may I beg your

She answered softly. The noise of the streets and the city buzz rendered it almost inaudible. He caught it as Benson.

He left her with the conviction she was a girl of good station and rare beauty, and that he had made an exhibition of himself. Her companion he decided was her servant. Maggie's complete silence strengthened this. Maggie was dumb with sheer astonishment at a "toff" striking-up to

Molly Bennett. His low, eager apology was a second riddle. Strike-ups were familiar introductions to Maggie, and nobody thought of excusing such a thing. Many a marriage

had come from such a beginning.

Lieutenant Deloney had sought Miss Benson everywhere; theatres, balls, concerts, private parties, up and down through the city, yet never again had he encountered the young beauty until to-night—and here, above all places, he found her, while he was out with his men on duty. It was a strange coincidence, and the young officer wondered—he could not but wonder—how she was in this locality at such an hour.

Molly had lived this little incident over and over. His face had haunted her; his voice rang in her memory, drowning often the roar of the mill machinery. The tiny gilt card with the pretty lettered name had been read a thousand times, until it was half-sacred. She saw by him that he believed her of his own status; in her soul had risen up rebellion, fierce and bitter, at the cruel circumstances of her life. There was a gulf between them, deep and wide. He moved among wealth, ease, refinement. Existence was for him one brilliant entertainment. She had poverty, toil, drunkencess to face, with the bitter knowledge that it might, it should have been otherwise. She dare not let him know the truth; she must try and keep his dream unshadowed; she must hold her standing in his eyes. He must not know her cruel secret.

She moved a step past him. The motion recalled him from a delirious dream upon this face of perfect beauty, of

ingenuousness, of sweet, shy love-me-ness.

"Miss Benson-one word-only speak one word."

"My name is not Benson."

"Forgive me; put me right. I fancied you told me so-

please put me right."

He looked straight into her eyes. His face kindled with admiration. Never had Dennis Deloney seen a more charming girl; no one of his circle had ever struck his fancy like this young stranger.

"Madalina Lyle Bennett."

He bowed. Molly gave it with certain pride; for a brief second she fancied that magic name of Lyle put her on his level, bridged the social gulf between them.

"Let me wish you good-night," she added quickly.

"I may see you home? It is late, and these are perilous times."

"I thank you, no, I am quite safe."

"Your friend," he said, "Have you to await her?"

"No, you frightened her, and she ran away."

The young soldier smiled. He fancied the woman or man who ventured into Carrick Hill at this hour must be anything but easily frightened.

"I hope," he smiled, "You do not share her terror of me." Her faced drooped, filling with shy pleasure; she allowed herself to feel it in all its perfect freedom for one long sweet second. The young man thrilled too, gazing at her lovely, blushing face. It was a sweet moment to them both; everything was forgotten—the slum—the late hour—the rioting—the unexpected meeting—was swallowed up in the sweet youth-joy of mutual admiration.

Suddenly the city clock struck twelve, and they both awoke.

"Good-night, Mr. Delonev, good-night."

"Miss Bennett, as a gentleman, I cannot allow you to go home alone."

Molly looked into his face.

"I know you mean kindly, but you cannot come."

' Why?''

She was dumb. Swiftly rose up the picture of that home, her drunken stepmother, her drunken father. She could bear anything, have him believe anything, rather than let him look upon that place or its besotted inmates.

"Your greatest kindness is to let me go. I have been out since nine. My father will be furious. I meant only to be a few minutes, but Maggie Reilly prevailed on me

to-to-

She paused, looked into his face with a half-smile. He was surely questioning himself why she was here at twelve o'clock at night.

"To?" he repeated, catching her smile and giving it back. "I would be ashamed to tell," she returned ingenuously.

"It was a joke, perhaps," he said lightly.

"Yes, but perhaps it was a sin. I did not mean to go, but that girl would not come back with me; then the soldiers came."

"Soldiers! Good soldiers," murmured the young lieutenant,

"if they brought you to me. Were you in that alley up the road?"

"Yes."

"I saw you run away."

"Did you," she laughed. "We thought not one of you saw us. We were going there"—looking backwards towards the little shop—"to have our fortunes told."

"Yours," laughed Deloney, "is to be fair fortune." He was glad to have her explain her presence here; nevertheless, he was really grateful for any accident that threw them

together.

"Do let me go home with you," he pleaded, but she would not. He was almost angry, for it would have been a real pleasure to loiter up the big lonely Shankhill with her. He was unused to his attentions being refused; the women of his own set were flattered to accept his smallest courtesy.

"I am sorry," he said, a trifle nettled, "you have an aversion to my company. I hoped we would be good friends,

and that you would permit me to call upon you.'

She coloured painfully.
"That is impossible," she returned candidly, "but believe

me, I have nothing to do with it."

The sincerity of the tone was unmistakable. His words called up a vision that was too beautiful to be realised. Three or four years back, when they lived in the pretty villa, he might have come, but now it was utterly impossible,

"May I understand if it were possible you would not

object?"

She was silent with the silence of consent, and her long dark lashes swept the soft white cheek; the exquisite downcast face was worthy a Raphael, as the ivory moonlight hung around and over her drooped golden head. The young soldier was fascinated. She was so young, so lovely; he remembered a pure freezia he had seen brought from a foreign land, and he thought her like it. He was taken with her. Yet there was no gav room, no waltz, no thral, no music, no wine, no sparkle or excitement. Just a young girl alone on the street, with the moonlight weaving a nimbus about her, that showed her more exquisite than all the fashionable beauties he had dallied about. And she had no objections to his visits; nav. he understood that they would be welcome to her.

He took her hand.

"How can I thank you enough, Miss Bennett?" His accents were low and tender, and sank away into her heart of hearts. "I may hope to meet you again," he continued gently, "some time. I would like to meet you if you would only permit me."

She was silent. To meet him! The very idea was like Heaven. Could she take such a pleasure? Was it really

possible such a thing was actually proposed to her?

"For a little while," he went on. "Anywhere, any time, only let us meet again. Surely you would not be so—cruel I was going to say—as to pass again into a stranger?"

She looked up into his eyes, so black and gleamy, and wondrously soft with kindling love. They drew her like a magnet; he saw there was no refusal on her face, and his pulses quickened.

"Believe me," he said passionately, "I have sought you everywhere. I have longed exceedingly for this meeting; let it not be our last. Could you come to-morrow night?"

"No," she breathed, "I could not come to-morrow night."

"Then the next night, or Sunday night?"

She faltered, and her eyes fell upon the red-heart ring glowing on her finger. Crawford rose up before her. Crawford, who had taken Sunday night—Crawford, who got every spare moment of her time. The truth was clear, every free evening was given to him. She had never resented it before; it came as a matter of course—now when she wanted an evening to herself every one was disposed of, and she wanted to go with this young soldier; she would write to Crawford and ask him to come round some other evening—and yet, she was uncomfortable, for his parting words were fresh in her ears. But, withal, she would like to go—it was a delight she could not forego; yes, she would go, it was the first real joy of her whole life and she would take it.

Then they made their arrangements, the young man almost eager, the girl blushing in soft pleasure. She forgot her father, her home and its misery, her other lover. Everything was swallowed up in the utter joy of this dalliance with the dashing young lieutenant; he was so handsome, so polite, and she loved his profession ever since her father's red coat dazzled her baby eyes. He pressed again to take her home, but she was firm, although it was a sacrifice to give up his

company for that long walk up the Shankhill with its cordons of soldiers stretched across the side streets. Yet, rather than let his eyes see that home she went alone. How her soul sang as she went; every nerve vibrated, her feet seemed scarcely to touch the ground; she patted her heart gladly. "I have seen him," she whispered to it, "I have seen him."

Once she paused and looked up at the sky so radiant, so blue, so full of indescribable beauty. It was one of those magnificent Irish summer midnights when the moon is a silver sun, and the stars glowing like candles, and the sky an expanse of violet blue, and the whole world catches the glory

and flashes it everywhere.

"What a night," she said, "What a night."

Verily, it was beautiful, and one to be remembered in her whole life, but it was not more radiant than herself. Nothing in the universe is more beautiful than a young maiden shining with the light of new born love.

## CHAPTER IV.

LIEUTENANT DELONEY waited until Molly had passed some way up toward Shankhill, then crossing to a side street, where his men were stationed, he called one, and ordered him to follow that girl, and find out where she lived, and who she was, and every detail about her that he could. "Report to

myself," he added, significantly.

He was not overstepping his duty, but he was certainly scrupulous to fulfil it. Martial law was not in force, but the military were in command of the streets—the police had been withdrawn to assuage the fury of the mob-and had power to stop every man, woman and child, and question them whither went they, and for what? Some few hours ago this young officer had been swearing at having to do police duty, but now he lit a cigar, complacently. A colouring, an intense subtle emotion had arisen, that would mark indelibly this Shankhill Road night work.

He had no intention of losing sight of this young girl again; thus it was that he had her tracked. He wanted to know where

he could find her.

The girl passed on homewards, like one in a dream; not until she entered their own street did she awake. From her father's house streamed a glare of lamp, rude, startling in the ominous darkness of the adjacent houses. As she approached, loud voices smote the air, awakening many echoes and many eavesdroppers in the midnight of the riots. Her father's voice rang in the air.

"Where's my girl? I know you hate her. You have driven her out of the house—where?"

He brought his clenched fist down on the table. The force of the blow shook the window-panes, and rattled up the street for a considerable distance.

Molly tren bled. She knew, of course, that one of the ever-

lasting brawls was on. For once in her life she was the cause. The door was open; she went in softly and quickly.

"Madalina, my darling."

The man's arms opened, and his daughter sank exhausted therein; for a half second he was deluded. He saw again his young, beautiful wife. Memories swept over him with unwonted power-the past-the glorious past, with love and luxury and youth; when he had been a gentleman, and Madalina Lyle his wife. Tears rose in his cyes, yet through them he saw his daughter as he had never seen her: full of fresh, new emotions. How beautiful, how rarely beautiful she was. He was more than fond of his girl; he was proud of her beauty and her descent. She was the proof positive that once her mother was his. Molly made herself necessary to him in many little ways; mending his socks, helping him to bed, setting him drinks in the night when his throat and vitals felt on fire, after a fearful drinking bout.

He did not forget these little things, and sometimes bought her a little present, a new pair of boots, a ribbon, a pair of gloves. These little gifts always angered his wife. She was jealous of Molly, and said the girl stood between her and her

husband.

Phil knew of her dislike, and when Molly could not be found he flew out at her, blaming her for chasing the girl. Mrs. Bennett had a tongue; betimes she was no niggard of it. To-night, having been blamed unjustly, she fired away. Bennett told her angrily to keep quiet. Just at that moment a loud knock shook the house, and through the unclosed door walked a raw-boned red-coat.

Molly grasped her father nervously. Mrs. Bennett cowered

back on the old couch, pale and startled.

"What's the row?" inquired the soldier, bluntly.

"That's my business," retorted Bennett, glowering at him.

"Faith," said the stranger; "it's a credit to ye."

Phil turned purple, and rose to his feet. Molly clung to him, fearful he would lift his hand. Meanwhile the stranger eved the young girl.

"What's her name?" he inquired, pointing to Molly.

"It's her that brings us trouble," whined Mrs. Bennett. "It's a horse whopped she shud be, a gallavantin' through the streets till after twelve o'clock at night."

Phil wrenched himself free from Molly, and, striding over to his wife, caught her by the shoulders and pushed her into the room off the kitchen, and shut the door. He turned to the soldier.

"What has she done; is anything wrong?" his anger trem-

bling before apprehension.

"I don't know; she was seen in a disaffected district. I must do my duty. What's her name?"

"Madalina Lyle Bennett."
"What does she do?"

"Spinner."

"Are you her father?"

"Yes."

"What do you do?"

"Storekeeper on the 'Island.'"

The soldier noted his replies, took the name of the street and the number of the door, and, lighting his pipe at the

dying fire, strode out again into the night.

When they were alone father and daughter talked far on into the dawn. Molly was very candid, and told him the truth, save that one delightful episode with Lieutenant Deloney. Phil was not angry. He was partly amused at her vivid description of the old card-cutter's den; he bade her be sure and go early the next visit. He was soberer than usual, and the girl ventured to say a word to him about the drink. He drew her unto his knee. "Child," he said, "if your mother had lived I would have been a different man. She died, and afterwards I never cared much what became of me."

He bowed his head over her shoulder to hide his emotion. Life—rosy, young, good, strong life, such as this young girl enjoyed—lay far behind. He felt no incentive, no power, no ambition to make towards better things. He did his day's work, drank a few glasses of a night, and drifted on—on—on nearer physical collapse, nearer the silent narrow red house in the churchyard. But the young girl reasoned with him gently, and finally, in a subdued voice, he promised to keep steady

because she asked him.

Molly was very happy. She felt nearer her father somehow, and his opinion of the card-cutter adventure, soothed her alarmed conscience. Molly allowed herself to forget how wrong it was to encourage the old woman in such a nefarious

calling. Her mind wandered always back to the one magnet, Lieutenant Deloney. She had seen him; she was to see him on Sunday evening, and, curious to relate, she decided, much after Crawford's fashion, that before Sunday evening there

were blank, colourless days to go through.

Lieutenant Deloney was abashed at the particulars regarding Molly. The worst he thought was misfortune had reduced her family. To find her a child of the people, a mill-hand, he was not prepared. He was really pained, for her beauty had made an impression on him past the common; and with all his messenger's assurance, he could not quite believe it. The girl's voice, her manners, the magnificent ruby ring, were not those of a spinning-girl. Yet why was she living up Shankhill? Why was she out so late with a shawl rolled round her head? He felt himself in uncertainty. Next day, being still on duty on Shankhill district, he was careful to find out the street, and pass the very house. He was filled with a great pity, and murmured to himself, "Many a flower is born to blush unseen."

He reverenced, too, the girl's delicacy that strove to hide it; but strive as he might, he could not get away from the bitter disappointment it was to find this girl, with the soft dreamy love-me eyes and magnificent profile, was not of his own le beau monde. He was a gentleman, his people belonged to the very highest circle of Belfast. They were of French extraction, having come over to this country in the train of James II. On the defeat of that monarch at the Boyne, the Deloneys made their way north, and settled in Belfast, a small out-of-the-way seaport in those days; but the cotton trade was in full swing, and the linen trade coming to the front even so early as that. The Deloneys had a quick sharp discernment, and their wider knowledge of the world stood them in good stead. They saw that in the new government the linen trade would take the lead. They plunged boldly, and swam with the tide straight to success. The world calls the French her ornaments; the flowers, as it were, of humanity; but behind the gaiety and glitter of this French family lay a keen business instinct that would be hard to beat. Across the channel the Deloneys were nobles, with titles, chateaus and powdered servants in vel-vel, and very few louis d'or to keep things afloat, but in Ireland they became steady go-ahead merchants,

whose education fitted them to boss the slow-plodding Ultonians. Very speedily they had the monopoly in their own hands. Their looms—hand-looms, of course—were in every village; almost in every cottage up and down the whole country. The firm became known as the leading house in Ulster. They were able to keep abreast with the times; for the little capital that had so much to do in France, made money when put to good mercantile pursuits. Old Mr. Deloney was a most estimable man, and rose to the highest honours of his adopted town. This was remarkable, seeing that Belfast was a Protestant town, and Mr. Deloney a devout Roman Catholic. But then he belonged to the Constitutional party; he believed firmly in blue blood and Royalty, and looked back proudly to his ancestors, who not only danced in the courts, but fought under the Oriflammes of the kings of France.

His son, in due time took his place, but he did not go in for civic honours; he was a business man through and through. When the mayoralty was offered him, it was hinted openly that a baronetcy would be offered him before his term of office closed; he declined definitely. When questioned privately

by his wife, he replied, plainly:

"My dear, I believe in £ s. d. and linen."

His descendants had reason to be thankful he had such a sound creed; he piled for them all, and threaded the wide world with their goods and their name. His father's old hand-looms gave place to mills and machinery, the wonder and the pride, not only of the family, but of all Ireland. The present family were rich enough to do without the large and flourishing concern, but their old ancestor so arranged affairs that the firm was to go on, and so the old patronymic lived and throve amid the new-born and brilliant names of modern business.

The present head of the firm was advanced in years, but hale and hearty. He had a great love for his eldest son, who had carried all before him at college, and was a studious, steady fellow, with literary instincts; but Denny was the black sheep. He was neither studious nor steady. He hated work; he thought it horrible of the "governor" insisting that he must be "something" when there was so much money in the family. He had read for the Bar for a short time; that did not suit lazy, laughing Denny. Then, yielding to his mother's

entreating, he had gone to Maynooth, but in an incredibly short time, for one of his easy, ambling gait, Denny dropped into supper unexpectedly. Then he had been in "the Place," as their firm was called, but the smell of the goods—browns, whites, hollands, dowlases, roughs, etc., made him sick. Now he was in the Service, and, doing better, that is, he was keeping to it longer; but it was a sore point with his father, who had expected his young dashing son to turn out a better linen merchant than had ever been in the family. "Governor," as he was called, had bustled round the "Place" all his life, persuading himself he was doing "business," but Denny could not have that. He had inherited his ancestor's Frenchified, careless gaiety, without their redeeming points. He was described as the image of his Grandsire, whose name he bore, and perhaps to whose memory he affected French airs, and spent a good deal of time, and a good deal of money in the capital of la France. He was the idol of his mother, the pet of society, the darling of the ladies, the favourite of his brother officers, the joy of his men, the courted and flattered lieutenant of his brigade; yet he kept bad hours, bet occasionally, drank frequently, floundered into debt, and floundered out, forgot to be brutal with his men; forgot, too, that beautiful Julia was a married woman, and worshipped on until danger loomed near, always getting into holes and escaping in some unexplained fashion. But he was handsome, and danced divinely; quoted poetry by tons, sang of l'amour immortel, eyes and hearts and hopes, till the drawing room was his slave, lent his last sovereign to any pal hard up, a handsome, devil-may-care young man, such was Denny Deloney, and very fascinating he looked in his uniform standing before the drawing-room fire of Deloney Hall, a musing thought in his glittering black eyes.

The room was all that wealth and taste could make it; the walls were frescoed gorgeously; there a vivid picture by Rubens, here a portrait by Poussin broke the rich surface with

richest art.

The furntiure was rare old Chippendale, some of it inlaid with mother-of-pearl, which shone meekly in the dim firelight. Yonder, where the Orient light fell upon it, was a white marble Cupid; murrhine cups, delicate Dresden vases filled with exotics were scattered broadcast, mingling among ormolu,

brocatel lace, marquetry. Standing apart was a large lemon plant, whose perfume was faintly refreshing; beyond, rising white and stately, unheedful of the broad leaves stretching up fetishly, was another rare marble, a companion to the Cupid of Venus de Medicis. It was a perfect specimen, and placed here, apart from cabinets of curios, one could drink in the perfection of mould and form and face without pretty bijouterie attractions.

Lieutenant Deloney was lost in thought; his eyes were on

this marble. It arrested him as it had never done.

"Ah," he muttered; "she might—she could have been the

model-bah-a spinning girl."

He flung round impatiently, and stared out at the shimmering evening, with its delicate stars. The wind stirred the crème silk curtains, and brought in the breath of the roses glowing upon the lawn. He moved towards the window, but turning back came again to the marble. He could not shake this thing from him as at other times. He stood gazing, then a merry flash crossed his countenance.

If the governor knew, if his mother knew, he was comparing

their matchless, priceless Venus to a Shankhill mill-girl.

The young Lieutenant smiled; then the shadow crept deep into his brilliant black eyes. The home and the vicinity where the young girl lived rose up before him; how far, how very far was she removed from him. Something surely was the matter with the sans souci young soldier. He was irritated; he was mad at the bare, bold truth. Just at this moment a gay laugh was at the window. Denny made a gesture of annoyance. A young lady entered the room; she was young and full of health and spirits, but far from good-looking, although hunted after and flattered as much as any woman need wish. She was an heiress, single and free, and meant to so remain, she often tossed her head and retorted.

To-night she was looking her best, dressed for dinner in a long trailing gown of cherry plush. The rich colour clarified her complexion slightly, for it was not pure. The wide, hanging sleeves showed her arms shaped fairly enough, but covered with powder. Her dark hair was plaited low on her neck, and pierced with a gold and coral fillet that matched the carcanet around her throat. She was flushed and joyous, and looked her best; but she was plain—painfully plain—except for the

fine brown eyes that gave vivacity to the entire face.

She was but twenty years of age, and in another year would have control of a great fortune. Old Mr. Deloney was her guardian; she had been left in his charge years ago, when death made her an orphan. Denny and she had played together as children, but now he could scarcely speak to her, simply and solely because his parents wished him to make her his wife; otherwise he and Mab were good enough friends. She was a saucy piece of goods, and rated him soundly now and again, and laughed mercilessly at his discomfiture.

Piquancy was natural to her, yet sometimes she used it as a mask to conceal her deepest feelings; although she said sharp

things, Mab Morrison had the heart of a tender woman.

She ran into the room by the open window, straight up to the

young soldier.

"All alone, Denny," she laughed. "Solitude has enchan-

He was already out of humour, and her coming did not tend to make him better. The raillery sounded rude, her scarlet dress loud, her dark, flashing eyes bold, never in his eyes did she show to less advantage, but then he had been communing with a classical image—perfect, faultless, pure as the blanched velvet of the Lily of the Nile.

"No, but I was invoking her to do so. You have broken the

"Pleasantly?" she returned, merrily.

"Most decidedly," he answered, gallantly.
"Softly, softly, Denny. Come, I'll make amends; I'll join your invocations.'

"Yours," he returned, steadily, "in this case would have no

effect."

"Whv?"

He shrugged his shoulders. She glanced at him quickly.

"Whatever can you have been thinking about?"

"I was musing, Mab, on those creations of the old masters; wondering were women in their day or ours so fair." sciously the stress of his feelings showed in his voice.

The girl before him was quick to note the look in his eve

lingering on the marble.

"If they were," she questioned, looking up, her soul in her face, "What then?"

"If is a myth," he smiled.

"Yes, but suppose," she persisted, "there existed one woman as beautiful as that?" pointing to the Venus.

"I would fall in love with her," he returned, gaily.

The young lady's eyes fell, her warm bright heart sank as lead. There was no chance for her, utterly none. It was hard—hard.

She shook out her long, cherry train, and strove to be herself. Denny divined she was nettled, and was glad; for her sharp tongue usually had the best of him. She was holding some violets in her hand. "Have some?" she said, trying to rally herself. "You like them, don't you; some king or country adopts violets. What a shame I never would learn history."

Denny smiled, murmured "He did not much affect violets,

but for her sake."

His low, soft speech, that to the young girl's excited ear was scarcely true, stung her disturbed spirit. To her wide, clear, untainted view, truth, even bitter truth, is noble, as

sweet falsehood is contemptible.

"Hush, Denny," she breathed, in low, passionate accents. "Do not pretend. Every soldier should be a gentleman; but only a true man is worthy that royal title. Be true, sincerely true, then even your enemies shall pay you homage. You care not for me, or my flowers," she added, in stung softness. "Say so at once."

"Courtesy seals my lips."

He was white to the brows. Had she been a man he would have caught her by the throat. As it was, he was not sorry to have it out and out with Mab, so that he might free himself from the petty torture of her blunt remarks, and that no misunderstanding might be between them on that other delicate subject.

"Courtesy," she flamed. "Cowardice, you mean. You are a coward, and could not be so honest. Henceforth we are merely acquaintances; my position in your father's house

renders that necessary."

"Were we ever anything more?" He bowed, his emphasis and meaning smile galling her still more.

"You are unworthy even that," she cried.

She was very angry, at herself and at him, and walked scornfully across the room. He followed her quickly. Her

heart gave a convulsive gasp. In a woman's silly way she thought he was coming to make it up, and pet her; but Denny opened the door with a graceful bow, and her long bright dress swept against his feet in high displeasure, while in her fuming heart leapt the demon disappointment.

# CHAPTER V.

THE few days between Molly's and Crawford's tryst passed slowly to him. He was looking forward to Sunday evening. During his work the thought of it had upheld him, and amid the ocean-like roar of the "Island," the girl's voice haunted him; the picture of her was still before him, heartening him on as he toiled with hammer and saw. Well he knew he was only a working man, a carpenter, and his knowledge of her parentage made him long to better himself; made him wish to be able to do well for her. The time slipped in until it was Saturday night. He had been knocking about the town, keeping away from her by sheer effort. He knew, as a rule, she cleaned down the house on Saturday after her release from the mill, and could not see him; yet it was an effort to keep from hanging about the street, so that he might chance on her going a message and have a chat, if only for a few minutes. He had often done that, trying to make believe it was an accident. To-night he had resisted himself, and put the evening in with a lot of fellows sight-seeing the wrecked houses and torn up streets, the work of the rioters. When he turned in it was fairly late. His landlady laid him down a letter: one glance told him it was not from any of his work-mates, not in any handwriting he had ever seen. He opened it carefully. "Shankhill Road,

A———— St., "Saturday.

"Dearest Willie,—

"Please do not come round until Monday night, and oblige. MOLLY."

His first feeling was of keen disappointment. Then he imagined something must be wrong. The sun did not always shine for Molly in that drunkard's home. He asked himself would it be best to marry her at once, and take her for ever from that unhappy house; but he had so little to furnish with. He would like, for her sake, to have a comfortable place to

take her. For himself he did not care there wasn't a stool, if only Molly were there. He fell to reckoning all he had, wondering how far it would go, and finally decided it would still be better than letting the girl endure such hard times in her father's. He concluded there had been a flare up of no ordinary kind. She did not wish him to turn up until matters were cooled. She was so sensitive on this subject, and would not talk about it. He had often wished she would, so that he might offer in speech his sympathy, but Molly was not like other girls in many ways. He lay back thinking over this letter; it was curious she had never written to him before, very curious. Then his mind drifted to the time she would be his wife—to their little new house, with the tea waiting when he came home from his work, and Molly herself waiting, beautiful and good—his, his very own.

It was a hot night, and his room was small. He crossed to the window and looked out. His heart thumped gladly at the prospect in his mind—the sweet future, whose entire sweetness lay in the great reality of his own love. He loved his girl really and faithfully. As he was leaning out of the window a low muffled cry swung up the street. Crawford awoke as from a sleep. He looked down: a tall, slim, young fellow was running for all he was worth. He was almost under the window. Crawford could see him gasping for breath; the sweat was running down his livid face, and the foam breaking from his small, thin mouth.

"What is up?" he cried.

"Save me," panted the runner. "Save me, for heaven's sake." His face, full of terrible dumb entreaty, was lifted up to the young man above. Eloquence reached its highest in that terrible expressive look; spirit flashed to spirit in that strange language that only souls interpret. Hurrying, flying feet broke into that significant silence. Crawford sprang downstairs, unbolted the door, and went unto the street. The voung man made one more frantic effort to escape. Those flying, fast-coming feet were the knells of doom in his ears; but exhausted nature could grant no more. He fell on the ground. Crawford tore open his collar band, and wiped the pouring sweat off his white, boyish face. He was in helpless collapse.

A crowd of rough, labouring-looking men flooded up, hot-

with pursuit, yet who kept a caution in their haste, not wishing to raise the neighbourhood, or call up the soldiers, who were not yet withdrawn, and stationed in the off streets. Foremost in this crowd was a stout, square built aged man, with sandy grey whiskers and pale eyes that glanced with rage and venom. He stepped forward.

"Let me at him. Let me at him, the Papish blood-sucker."
"No," said Crawford, "I will not," and he stood before the prostrate boy. Although instantly surrounded he did not lose

his nerve, and to defend this boy he meant to try.

"Would you," he asked, "strike a defenceless lad? See, he has fainted," and he stepped aside to let them glance at the bloodless face, ghastly as a corpse.

bloodless face, ghastly as a corpse.

"Strike!" returned the man. "Strike, yes I'd strike. He's a cut-throat, a double-dyed villain. We have old scores to

settle."

Wild words, but the brutish expression, the gloat that spread over the speaker's face was wilder. Triumph had come, revenge had come. He gazed at his victim in a delirious

devilish delight.

Suddenly a shivering, convulsive gasp caught this man's whole system. His face turned scarlet-purple, then pale as the bov's upon the flagstones. A gurgle rattled in his throat; he half-choked, then vomited a few mouthfuls of bright ruddy blood. The other men drew back, awed half an instant.

"Ha! my enemy," muttered those bloody lips. "You have nearly done it, but not quite; there is still strength to pay you

all."

He staggered slightly, tingling with conscious weakness and conscious revenge that is so sweet, so cruel, so over-mastering. Not for party or religious differences had this man a quarrel with this boy; no, it was a personal affair. He had waited long this opportunity. It had never come until this great general insurrection among the two party sections of the city. Legions of personal petty spites were raked up and fought out during this fearful outbreak. This man had hounded his foe for months, to-night he was run to earth. The young man had run until his veins were bursting; his heart jumping, his head a furnace, his eves leaving their sockets. Never had human wretch such a flight, and the mental terror was worse even than the terrible race. He trembled to become a prey to a gang of "Prodessans"; he was helpless and undone. No room in

his throbbing head, less in his quivering heart for compunction for the worse than murder he had brought upon this old man who stood gloating. Ah, no; in that semi-conscious state he only knew the damned Prods had got him. The old man gave a low, hoarse laugh; then raised his heavy boot. Crawford, with a spring, caught his leg. It would have been easy, with his powerful strength, to throttle this old man. But he was an old man, and that scarlet trail across his lips, and that strange appalling expression on his face held him back. He was glad afterwards that he had the luck not to raise a finger against this old man. He held him back, but he could not hold his tongue.

"Give it him, boys; give it him. Maybe he's one of them as

done for young Calvert, as was annoying nobody."

Young Calvert, as he was popularly called, was a bread-server, and had been brained in Grosvenor Fields a few Sunday mornings back, going to feed his horse, which was stabled in that Roman Catholic vicinity. A wave of regret, a hurricane of rage swept the whole city, and especially the Shankhill district, at this young man's murder. Never was seen such a funeral, never heard such a weeping as when the solmen cortege wended its way, amid weeping thousands, to the old Shankhill graveyard, "for he was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow."

Well might such a reference whet the vengeance of these rude men, but the man used it only for his own ends. He was not thinking of young Calvert while he baited these men. A vision had risen up, a sweet smiling merry vision of laughing blue eves and dimples and blooming youth; it gave place to

another, shrivelled, stark and stiff.

"Jessie," he breathed: "my Jessie, you slew her. If you had done it kindly I'd have forgiven; but to steal her, to starve in shame in an empty room through the bitter winter was too cruel; my own sweet little one that nestled to my heart, whose yellow curls hung like heaven's light around my coarse, hard hand. I begged you in tears—the tears of an old fond man—to tell me where she was; if she were still alive; but you denied. Through those long weary months my old wife and I suffered hell's despair and uncertainty, and you knew, you knew," and he waved his arms widly.

"Then it came out; all the town heard she was dead. How

well I remember that day. It was in the dead of January, and the snow was on the ground. She had had a baby, and you left them-living-in that bare cold room, and when you came

next morning she and her baby were stark stiff."

"When the man you sent told it, my old woman took fits, and the next day she, too, was dead; that made three of them. Afterwards I was glad her mother never saw the wreck of our bonnie lass-her poor, hollow cheeks, her wasted hands, the strained pain on her wee face. It was awful, awful, my poor Tessie."

Tears were streaming down his cheeks; his voice had gradually risen, until it had the shrill, aggrieved tone of a

wounded child, broken ever and anon with sobbing.

"Nor was that all," he went on. "You put a lie on her coffin; you branded her poor starved remains, for you never married her. Had I known, she would never have gone to her grave with a labelled lie upon her breast. Your name was never hers: you killed her and the child and my old wife. Many a one has hung on the gallows for far less."

"Boys, revenge my poor dead girl." "Aye, aye, Dick; was't him?"

The men crowded round. Crawford never felt his giant strength useless until now. He saw what was coming; he was powerless to avert it.

"Villains," he cried, sternly, "will you murder a helpless youth?" The old man reeled, then staggered forward, until

under Crawford's eyes.

"Young man," he cried, wildly, "I am a father."

This to his distorted mind was more than a reason. It was the right to do as he was doing, and he rushed in, the others following, upon the prostrate boy. Crawford raised his voice, and that fearful cry rang up the midnight air.

"Murder! Murder!" then, leaping from them, he hammered at a door or two, yelling that fearful yell, "Murder! Murder! Murder!"

He was not to escape for this. The men turned on him, and he felt the force and furv of their fists; but doors and windows were slapping, and the ruffians made off. An Irish mob meets and melts like spirits of the air. In almost a breath Crawford was alone with the dying lad; nay, not alone, for there, slightly apart, his face drawn and white, his lips gaping, stood one who had not strength to go.

Crawford did not notice him. He bent over the boy, and to his horror saw a knife sticking in his throat. He half-hesitated, then gently, grimly drew it out. The poor lad's heart was fluttering wildly; nature was fighting her last fight. Memory, with a keenness, fiercer, fresher than a March wind blew all his life in his teeth, and Jessie, happy, smiling Jessie; then that other Jessie as he had seen her first on that silent, snowy morning, black and stark upon the tossed counterpane, the frozen little one on her extended arm.

Ah! it was too much to see in this moment of dissolution. He cried out in agonv, but Sin had come to get her wage.

"Mercy,—mer——!"

"Justice," snapped a voice, huskily. "Eye for eye, tooth

for tooth."

Crawford started, and looking round saw the old man. Ere his eye turned back, a spurt of blood leapt from his worn lips; thicker, quicker, redder it came, until it was a gory stream adown his chin, over his clothes, and upon the dry flagstones. His pale eyes turned with agony to the warm young lustres of dawn, then he dropped with a thud upon the street, deaddead even before his enemy.

#### CHAPTER VI.

CRAWFORD was in collapse, the fearful tragedy he had witnessed left him like a wilted leaf. His knees knocked together; his hands shook. The vision of that awful night was in his eyes with every detail; he seemed to see the death struggles of that boy lengthened into a terrible eternity, by the gaping screaming spectators who gushed up. One old woman in her flannel petticoat and night cap pushed forward, and seeing an Agnus Dei hanging from the lad's neck fell on her knees and recited in quivering whispers, "The Rosary for the Dying." A silence fell about, as the boy's lips paled, and round his mouth a white ring of agony settled. final pang wrung body and soul asunder, his closed eyes unshut and stared fixedly at the dawn, the old woman prayed intensely, but her voice soon became drowned in the ever deepening din of the crowd, whose outer rim was in wildest uproar. Above the excitement and crush and cry, somebody's canary, hanging in an adjacent fanlight, sang its dawnsong with thrilling, piping sweetness.

The horror of blood, the curse, the cry, the prayer, were warped into Crawford's brain, while the white, beseeching face of the boy he could not save was everywhere; it haunted him. He was not superstitious, but yet he fancied that boy was near him—that any moment, from out the silence, his

voice, his presence would come.

He could not settle, he could do nothing, for everyone was looking at him, even his lodging-mistress. The crowd outside that was kept in order by a detachment of soldiers was as keen to see him almost as they were to look at the bloody street. He was the only man who knew the particulars, and a sordid abominable interest was manifested by everyone. Crawford felt it keenly; strong, honest chap as he was, he shrank at the stare of countless thousands. He longed intensely to get out—away up the road into the country an hour to draw his breath freely, yet he hesitated before these gaping crowds. He threw himself on his bed, for, of course, no sleep had been possible with the wild excitement of his own mind, and the confusion and din of the crowds, the

continual interruptions of the coming and going of the Authorities, pressmen, etc. Every detail had to be repeated to every fresh inquirer until the young man was fairly done up. He had never known himself so used up before. He wished for Molly, to hear her quiet voice, to have her sympathy, to see her beautiful soft face. He felt she would do him good. As the hours hung on, he resolved to venture out when it was dusk. The evening wore in, and as the dark was falling he slipped out by the back door, and going into the main thoroughfare he hailed a car. He was feeble, nervous, and unable to walk. He ordered the jarvey to drive away across the city—far from the very atmosphere of the ghastly occurrence. The cool night air refreshed the young man, and as the car ambled along he grew calmer and better. The jaunting car turned into High Street under the shadow of the Albert Memorial with its British lions and massive pedestal, on which stands the figure of Albert the Good, and far above the clock-tower with its magnificent finial rising into the darkening sky. The street, wide and lined with palatial buildings, was full of life, for the people were pouring in in their thousands to worship. It was a pleasing scene, some talking softly, others laughing lightly and flashing glances at passers-by, all forgetful of the wild riots tugging at the city's core, others passing reverently to the house of prayer. Crawford's car ran quite close to the pathway—the trams occupied the middle of the roadway. He was looking carelessly at the stream of people, so vivid in summer attire, with the city gases full upon them. Suddenly his look guickened, his pipe dropped from between his teeth-Molly was walking at his feet leaning on the arm of a gentleman.

It was only a cursory glance. When he looked again the stream of people had intervened, and the car had rolled up the street. But there was no mistake, he saw her, cool and beautiful in her white muslin dress and golden hair lying in gorgeous braids upon her shoulders; her whole demeanour that of soft bashful love-me-ness.

She had kept her midnight promise to the young officer; it had promised too much to be lightly given up. Deloney was punctual, which had she known him she might have appreciated, for punctuality in affairs of gallantry was, with Deloney, like the appearances of comets—at intervals.

He had promised to go to church with her, but he had no intention of doing so. He was by birth and training a Roman Catholic; in life he was free from bias, and on the best of terms with all the "Isms." This state of feeling had not sprung up in a moment; nay, the seed of it had been sown many years ago in a little chapel away in the heart of the country, when Deloney was a lad. The family had a country house away down near one of their great Bleaching and Finishing Works; here they repaired occasionally for the benefit of the children's health. During these visits the family went en masse to the little chapel nestling among the hills. It was something of a startler to the little Deloneys, reared in the lap of luxury, to find themselves surrounded by a half-clad, hungry-looking congregation, who had walked shoeless and breakfastless for many miles to chapel. The people in the surrounding hamlets were poor, beyond description, formerly they had been good hand-loom weavers earning plenty, but now the looms were silent, the power-looms having killed them; the young men of the districts had crowded into the cities or emigrated, the remainder were the older people and the little children, they had to live off the bit of land and the pigs; no wonder hunger looked out of their eyes, and their poor uncovered feet were red and bleeding. One Sunday after mass, to such a congregation, the priest read the "Black List."

This was made up of the names of those who had not paid for masses for the souls of their dead relatives. To have one's name read out thus from the altar is the greatest disgrace a Catholic family can suffer. Now, Young Deloney was much exercised in his mind over this event. He saw with a child's clear unerring vision that the people had nothing to pay with, that they were simply starving. He asked his mother this poser: "Does God like money?"

When he tried to explain what he wanted to get at, he was told to hold his tongue, but the lad's inward spirit had got a shock. As the years advanced the constant, continuous cry of the church for money increased in his ears, he became hardened, the fine spiritual sense of religion was choked; if it were a money matter, there was enough in his family to get them all through; one time, under the influence of drink, he spoke out his truest conviction, to the horror of his elder rother, who happened to be present.

"The Church," he said, "is the biggest shop on earth, nothing like it in ancient or modern history has ever faced the sun. Within her store you may buy not only happiness here, but the greater happiness hereafter; in no other mart are such commodities for sale. All other churches were only feeble imitations of his own in the young man's estimation. He had no quarrel with any of them; he meant to have a good time, and at the end—well it was far off, and he had no plans—but there was money.

It was a lovely summer evening, and he did not relish the idea of spending it in a church pew, either Roman or Anglican. He delicately hinted a drive. Now the young girl, with his glowing fervent glance upon her, was not hard to coax, so instead of passing through the superbold portico of St. George's Church, where the organ was already pealing, they passed up High Street, arm and arm, through the crowd-

ing people.

Deloney looked at her critically as he laid her hand upon his arm, she was so simply dressed in that plain white muslin affair that her beauty was startling. It seemed to fairly carry the young man beyond himself. He was in plain, broad cloth to-night, with a low cut waistcoat, the rage of the period, blazing with diamonds, faultlessly dressed as he ever was, and Molly thought him perfect in feature, face, and form. They walked slowly up the street, his head bending over her shoulder, it was impossible for Crawford to mistake his attitude, but more impossible for the young inexperienced girl to resist his voice; her heart thumped and her drooped eves quivered.

Crawford, who had leaped off the car, brushed against her unnoticed. His deep, steady going soul had got a rude arousal. His first impulse was to tear her from this stranger, but her absorption, her blindness to his very nearness, stunned him like a blow; he staggered past without a sign. It had never once entered his mind that Molly had another admirer, or that even such a thing was possible. She was his, he believed, and on one's else. As she hung on this stranger's arm his heart almost burst with jealousy and slighted love and rage. He remembered her letter of Saturday night; it was all too evident why it had been sent. This was the girl he loved all his life, a double dealing creature who dared to put him off while she went with another, who

dared to be so bold as ask him to come back after this. And he had worshipped her as something higher, better, more sacred than anyone. Was she not educated, clever, beautiful, a baronet's grand-daughter, a specimen of finer, purer clay than most mortals? Could she be that most hateful type of woman, a deceiver, a double dealer? No, no, no. She was his, his only, the years aback seemed to gather voice and thunder in his ears. Mine! mine, mine. He strode up behind the unconscious pair; he did a shabby thing, the first perhaps he had ever done—tried to hear what Deloney was saying to her—but the young soldier was a practised inamorato and his words fell only into the ear of his gentle companion.

They passed up the thoroughfare slowly into the city's heart. Just here is Castle Junction Corner, the trysting place of Belfast Bohemians, the loitering lobby of young mashers who sport their first cigarette. Deloney drew his fair companion slightly out of the crush in toward the big jeweller's window where the bronzes and black marbles shone through the uncurtained glass like idols of an Indian Temple. The young girl held her eyes down, possibly from the glare of the street lamps, possibly from other causes. She was aglow and tull of new existence, she felt Deloney's dark, fond eyes lingering on her in tenderest admiration, her young soul seemed breaking its bonds and rising up, gloriously free to meet them.

Deloney advanced a few steps nearer the curbstone, half raised his yellow gloved finger; he was only hailing a car from the stand in the centre of the road; it drew over instantly. He half lifted, half embraced Molly as he put her on to the

car seat.

They drove away up the Royal Avenue, with its colonnades of lamps, leaving Crawford full of rage and jealousy upon the foot walk.

He watched them half-mad, scrutinising narrowly Deloney's refined aristocratic appearance, there was no mistaking this dark-eyed, elegant creature; he was a gentleman, and to the fierce eyes of the young ship-carpenter his face seemed not unfamiliar; where he had met him or seen him, in that burning moment, he could not recall. He ran after them, but the hack swept away like an exultant triumphal car ladened with spoils.

# CHAPTER VII.

THE whole affair occurred so quietly, so naturally almost, that Crawford was baffled for a second; then recovering himself, he remembered the car he had been using himself was waiting him there in the roadway; he got on to it and followed

them up Royal Avenue.

How different his agitation to the still rapture, the musing pleasure, of the young girl. She was supremely at ease and peace; she had taken her draught of youth's Lethe-sweet draught, fond dream: alas that life, harsh real life, dispels all. By one of those happy changes she had missed hearing of the great tragedy. Her father and mother had both been drunk as usual on Saturday night; Sunday they had been in bed until dinner time. The whole work of the house consequently fell to Molly's lot; she had kept the front door shut purposely to keep out the neighbours. When she left the house to meet Lieutenant Deloney she had passed every one with a hurried good-evening, lest anyone should keep her late or join themselves to her as she went to keep this all-important engagement. She was here to-night unruffled and happy, almost silent, but conscious keenly of her own happiness, of the beauty about, around, and within her. had she noticed how superb were those great, magnificent business palaces along the avenue. Perhaps the street lamps or those bending, burning stars gave them new lustre, or perhaps the new light in her eyes saw clearer: the marble basements, the garnished capitols, the tall, white columns of the bank, the minarets, the red granites of building after building, were "all mellowed and mingling, yet distinctly seen." The soft hiss of the city buzz, the Sunday voices of the people, the level monotony of the passing feet, the far-off echo of a church bell blended on her ear like harmony.

Crawford strained eagerly; by-and-by he overtook them. the girl's white dress was as a beckoning pennant; his eyes

fastened on it, he pointed it out to the jarvey. "Follow that."

The man nodded; it was not the first woman's dress his good nag trotted after. He wondered would it be a race; it seemed not, for the hack in front was taking it easy. Crawford fully expected the car would turn up North Street, go on straight past the notorious quarter Molly had had her tortune told; on into Shankhill where she lived; but it flew forward by the Free Library, with its engaged pillars and wavy tracery and tiny balcony that hangs over a flood of traffic; on round into Clifton Street, by the Soldiers' Home and the Orange Hall, where King William III. and his white horse hold the pride of place; on under the long, slender Gothic

shadows of the church spires at Carlisle Circus.

Crawford was trying hard to think who this aristocrat could be. He had seen him, but where—where—where, he asked himself again and again. Suddenly a foolish idea came to him. He was her cousin, Sir Percy Lyle. The pain in his heart lessened a trifle. Perhaps the Lyles were going to take her up. Now that he was about to marry her, he did not know that he wished or wanted anything from them. His mind floated down the years to the time her father was making Miser Phil's savings fly, to one day in particular, when he and the Rector of "The Round Church"—St. Matthew's—up Shankhill, had driven up this very road to Lyle Park with a shy, half-frightened girl. They had done their best to reconcile an old wrinkled gentleman to that little girl who

stood trembling like a little animal awaiting doom.

That last entreaty was as the first, and the girl, not understanding fully, but feeling keenly that she had been slighted, cried bitterly all the way home, with his hand holding hers in silent but eloquent sympathy. He remembered on that occasion seeing a tall, handsome youth, and the Rector had told him he was the old man's heir. As Crawford reflected on this, the wild idea came to him that the exquisite Molly was out with was this boy, now Sir Percy Lyle and her full cousin—yet the young man's face seemed nearer to him—as if he had seen it but yesterday; yet, who else could he be? Molly knew no one in high life—"He must be her cousin," he said to his own doubting, angry heart. He hated him, cousin or not. The consciousness came to himself that he would show up a great, hulking, working fellow beside this elegant, well-bred, well-dressed specimen. The cars drove along the Antrim Road, under the shadow of the noble moun-

tain which the schoolboys call Napoleon's face-inflexible, defiant, with an irresistible charm that even the Emperor of the French might not disdain, is that proud old hill. In days long gone it was the keeper of many mysteries. Death and blood have fed its bonnie broom. Here the Savage and MacGilmore fought; here the young wife died of a ruthless arrow at her husband's feet; the Danes caroused, the pirates revelled high up in the caves where the eagles built. In later days Tone, Russell, and Neilson, wrote their triune treaty here, and signed it with their blood. Belfast Castle lies weird and witching on the hill-foot; its beautiful, ceramiclike masonry, clear and glorious in the summer starlight, it sits apart, almost lonely, looking solemnly on the blue lough, and the big, hazy city. The charm of isolation so peculiar to Irish scenery emphasizes itself about the Castle; even the flapping flag upon the tower cannot do way with it. Thick warped laurels, like walls of consecration, surround the memorial church of the late young earl, and make darkness beside the beautiful white nomestead of the Chichesters.

The county road runs quite close to the Castle grounds, and has on its other side rich, yellow cornfields, waving softly as the air rushes up fresh from the sea. Beyond the cornfields, and to the naked eye, apparently touching them, is Belfast Lough, a belt of trembling ash-green water, quivering just now with the opening glory of young night. Across the water is a deep blue boundary that slopes gently upward, and loses itself in cloudland. It is the county of Down, so gentle and tame and pretty when sailing up the Lough, compared

with the grandeur of the Antrim coast.

The still, starry night was broken only by the far off wash of the sea, the cries of the birds, the lift and fall of the horses' feet. How pleasant such a silence to two young, fast-beating hearts, full of unsaid things that never can be spoken, and are all the sweeter and more delightful in their unsayableness. Never had Molly really known happiness until to-night, driving through the opaline night far from her workaday, humiliating life, listening, believing in conscious joy the young soldier's loving whispers. He was saying poetry to her—low, soft, delicious, like the echo of a singing bird upon the wing.

They were beyond the city boundary. The lamps were passed long since; only the opal skies lit the way and showed

the country with its rugged hills and the far off sea, and the

hard white country road leading to Ballyclare.

Crawford's face was hard and rigid. He had been forced back to his first conclusion—she was deceiving him. This stranger was not her kinsman. Lyle Park was a mile behind; neither of them had looked at it. It was cruel that she whom he loved, whom he idolized all these years, could treat him so. Don't come round till Monday night.' It rang in his ears

like blackest treachery.

"That Monday night," he muttered to himself, "will never come. Why did you not write, 'Never come back? I have another fellow I would rather have.' Why? Because you are

an Eve—because ——"

His lips snapped, his head bent, his future was clouding darkly, a dreariness that was new and unusual fell upon him. He could not understand himself without that girl in his heart, and he was conscious, fearfully conscious, that she had withdrawn herself. The evening air blew against his temples cool and free. He lifted up his eyes to look about, but everything seemed blank; there was no beauty in the exquisite night-scene for him. Molly was before him with another. The voice of the driver aroused him; the car in front had turned and was coming full upon him. Not wishing to meet them face to face, he got off the car, crossed the road to aloaning—a narrow lane that ran down into the Shore Road, biding the jarvey await him until the other car had passed.

Here he stood behind a heavy hedge of "bread and cheese," with the dog-daisies and white hemlocks rampant at his feet. He could see the road white and straight between the verdant hedgerows. The wheels were approaching; he watched eagerly, holding in his breath; the horse's feet seemed so close that to his excited ear he fancied the brute had plunged upon the pathway and was tearing through hedge and hemlock to his side. A fierce, strong purpose steadied him to be ready

to leap forward to rescue her from danger or death.

The car was in sight, trotting slowly through the summer night. Deloney's arm was round her shoulder, his jewelled fingers pressed ever so lightly on her soft, finely tinted cheek; gently, but irresistibly, he turned her face and bent his own over it.

Once, twice, thrice, long before he had finished, Crawford

closed his eyes. He stood stunned as if struck by a subtle, silent lightning, then fell upon the gentle-eyed daisies. A storm surged through him, roaring, crushing, devastating all before it. One thing only remained—the terrible fact of his love—he loved her—he must always love her, no matter how things went—she was as dear, as sacred to him as if they were already pledged at the altar-he fought against it, he raged at it, but the fact grinned in his face secure.

"I cannot bear it," he cried. "Her face, the subtle charm

of her has bewitched me. I am mad."

He looked it, with his eyes intense as fire and the veins across his temples swollen darkly, his great, herculean frame quivering. He was taking badly his first consciousness of the tyranny, the merciless supremacy, the cynical mockery, the hidden, unspeakable bondage, that rendering one's self to

woman brings.

The moments rushed on, beneath the summer's silver stars and the toned rolls of colour aback in the western skies that made the big tall trees stand out sharp and black, but he saw nothing but the flutter of a white dress, the gleam of a golden His car was waiting in the distance, and in a second the flying feet of the nag tossed the powdery dust over the clustering haws and big black-berries ripening along the hedgerows. The leading car turned into Fort William Park, a wide sweeping avenue that runs from Antrim Road to Shore Road. It was still as silence, dark as blindness just beyond the entrance Crawford hesitated. Why should be follow to see love-passes between these two?

But that dress, so white, so flimsy, so maddening, drew him like a crystal. He pulled out his watch and struck a match. It was past nine o'clock. Why were they not going straight home—why taking this route when the night was wearing on?

"Be careful," he said to the driver, "there is a heavy incline at the foot of the park." Then he settled himself to

see it out.

## CHAPTER VIII.

MOLLY was in love's first paradise. Everything was beautiful, redolent of the roses, fresh and delicious; no wilted leaves, no stabbing thorns. This beautiful evening, with her train of stars in purple skies, her wild-flower breath, her hush, her glamour, her low-voiced poetry, her soft sense of admiration was the first pleasure her young soul had ever quaffed. The drive went on fondly and slowly. There is a period in existence when Time is lavish with us, and we are lavish with Time. Both these young people were steeped in the hatchis of new emotions, so all-absorbing, so enthralling, in youth's fond They sped adown the fantastic avenue, between great banks of clay, which have little twisted knots of thorn on their tops, and down their red sides sprouts of whins. A lonely goat is climbing up the embankment, and tossing the furze blossoms into the shough that is feeding the big braken waving in clumps. The park is very dark where these embankments come almost together. The eerie weird aroma of Ireland catches the senses, then suddenly the large gates at the lower entrance start up darkly magnificent in the summer twilight. The goddess over the gate is ready with her basket of fruit, while the winged Cupid holds his Cornucopia toward the big city sitting there in the hollow The heavy slope of the Park hides the lough; now it leaps to the eye, a big tossing sea, flooding off to the ocean on the left; on the right a long twisted eel, forming Belfast Harbour. Masts, full of dimples of light, dark hulls with darker figures scudding about; long ranges of shipyards line the verge. The flickering coloured lights outline the semi-circular harbour, which makes a strong light and shade study at the base of the rough old hill range.

Into the open road the cars flew, past the old Mineral Waterworks that sit out on the alluvial land; its flat roof, little windows, and whitewashed facade, making Eastern-like shadows on the dank grass and torn seaweed that the tide floats in.

Denny and his companion drive on, dreamy and pleased. He, too, is enjoying himself, not perhaps to the extent of the

girl, but he is pleased and happy, and gives himself altogether

to the joy of the moment.

They watch the crows flying home over Jennymount, where local tradition whispers ghosts frequent because the fond proprietor said Jennymount was fair as the fairest nook of Heaven. The seagulls plunged into the moonlit water, then cooed in their flight to distant rocks. These young people laughed, careless of the old ghosts of Jennymount House. The car was jogging easily, the old jarvey half-asleep. Time had stopped for his fares, and thrown the tail end of her cloak over him too. There is perchance in most lives a season like this when Time is nowhere. We feel it; the sun stays one hour, then he glides on; the ticking begins in the clock, the sunlight That sweet sunned hour is gone, crept for ever into memory's heart. Often we invoke for such another season,

but life is never liberal with these rare times.

The car dashed on between the brinding rows of street-lights swerved to the right, straight on past the Areopagus of Belfast with the wide, sweeping stylobate and tall Corinthian columns, and high up on the summit the obdurate Them, pale and beautiful, with her tiny scales so hopelessly exact. Opposite, as if to warn the city of being weighed and found wanting by those scales, looms the massive grim groined new gaol. Local "collogues" aver that every scaffold scene is re-acted at the gaol scaffold one after the other as the anniversary comes round. Now, Daly, next Ward, that swings from that great black beam, then O'Neale, the first who swung upon it: young, handsome, dry-eyed, with his white face strained. He looks up with a soldier's nerve, and scans for the last time his comrades and friends among the mob that surged up to the dragoon's flank, and boohed the armed police. How the crowd wept; what tears blurred the glowing August sunshine of that morning as he swung dead. He died perhaps deservedly, for he had shot his perior officer; but he was so young, so handsome, so high spirited; a fine, noble, young animal that could ill bear the taunt that provoked the deed-that everybody was sorry. Crawford remembered this dread affair, and looked away from the great black beam. Across his mind and heart flashed again the bloody scene of Saturday night. It rose upon him afresh in all its ghastly hideousness. Perhaps we never realise till afterwards the ferocity of some charges in the siege of

Life; it seemed so with Crawford. After this hour of forgetting, the horror of it came on him like darkness, and strong,

healthy as he was, he turned faint and sick.

The cars were soon on Shankhill Road. Deloney and Molly alighted; he knew they were in the vicinity of the girl's home, and, surmising her feelings, he had too much good taste to go further. They lingered on the big broad road, so full of boys and girls talking the old story that is fresh and entrancing to each new son and daughter of humanity. Crowds were here and there, meetings, preachings at every other street corner. Deloney was half-alarmed, for he was unfamiliar with street preachings. As they passed near one of the gatherings a chorus was raised:

"I do believe, I now believe, that Jesus died for me, That on the cross He shed His blood, from sin to set me free."

The young officer and Molly paused a second. The leader of the meeting, standing on a chair, raised a devoted, chastened

face upward toward the skies.

"Friends, I want to tell you a story about that chorus. There was a little lad who attended a ragged school, and was taught it. He began to sing it in the little bare room where he and his drunken father lived. As the poor lad sang, the great Spirit opened his mind to understand it; the lad's heart filled with intense joy intense peace, intense music. He was free; the poor, unlettered, unknown, unloved son of the drunkard—free to joy, free to heaven-like pardon from God. The environment of his small life was obliterated; nothing was real but this great consciousness, 'Jesus died for me,' and the half-starved, half-clad child became uplifted, unaware almost of his condition.

"He sang on, but there came a new sense, a glory in his singing it had never had. His father listened, and became furious, because even to his blunted ear it bore an echo of that great good other world where he had no stake. It seemed to

darken the man's badness and his sin.

"'Stop it,' "he cried; stop it, boy. I cannot have hymn

yelling."

"'Father,' returned the child, 'He died for me; it has made me so happy. I cannot stop. Listen':

"'I do believe, I now believe, that Jesus died for me,
That on the cross He shed His blood from sin to set me
free.''

"With an oath he struck the child. 'Now will you stop; next time it will be harder.' The sobbing lad crept to his little bed, but through his pained and troubled sleep his thin lips moved in softest syllables, 'I do believe, I now believe.' Next day he could not rise to go to school. He felt sore and ill, and his little body grew weaker, missing badly the food of the ragged school, and as he lay abed all day, his only solace was his little hymn. Sometimes the child spirit seemed away among the great white-robed unnumbered throng, his little voice blending in their great angulificent oratorio, and then his mind would come back, and he prayed for his poor drunken father that he, too, might 'believe that Jesus died' for him. His father came home, and seeing he had not been up all day, beat him again. 'This is your hymn singing; I knew it would turn you into a good-for-nothing-lazy loon.'

"'Father, don't, don't: I'm real bad,' and the poor eyes beseeched helplessly. 'Father, maybe I'll die, and ye'll be sorry; but I've no grudge, 'deed I haven't.' The lad lay back exhausted and done. Toward morning, when the dawn was young in the sky, the child's pain passed away. A feeling of exuberance, of unearthly triumph lit up eyes and feaures: his voice, clear, deep, full of sweetness, not born of earth, filled

the room:

"I do believe, I now believe, that Jesus died for me,
That on the cross He shed His blood from sin to set me free."

His spirit had flown home—on, on, on—on the white wings of the morning. His father, roused by the grand, sonorous music, started up; he thought the dawn was angelic light as it kissed the pale smiling face of the child. All his harshness and cruelty and drunkenness were so many scourges to scourge himselt, for his boy, his treasure in the earthen vessel that he esteemed so lightly, had passed from his keeping for ever. Friends, will you take the child's Christ, will you? He is waiting here on Shankhill Road to make you even as the child was—Free to Heaven. The children in the centre of the crowd, who were squat on the ground, cried; many of the older people tried to hide their reluctant tears. Deloney glanced about

him. It was an unusual scene to him, though common on Shankhill. He had never seen people so stirred; never in his whole religious training heard a direct appeal to the people to surrender themselves to Christ here and now. He wondered at it, and his mind stole down the years to the time he was a little boy sitting in the chapel groping after God, the God that perhaps he had missed. He knew as he stood there on the fringe of the working class crowd this Sunday evening that far from him were his Saviour and his Christ; his feet seemed to wander from the church-pew to the wilderness; set adrift by the money-cry of the Church. He turned to Molly. She was leaning on his arm; tears were trembling on her eyelashes; he drew her almost reverently away.

"What a story," she murmured. "Surely there is nothing

so Heaven-like as faith like that little boy's."

He did not reply. To speak on religious subjects was to him like entering a dark chamber—nothing clear, nothing certain. Only to-night this one truth had been forced home from an unexpected quarter that whatever there was in Religion

he had not got it.

They bade good-night lingeringly and lovingly, arranging to meet again. This well-bred young exquisite forgetting he was upon the open street, forgetting men and women were passing to and fro; he was one among the many on the Shankhill Road as he whispered into the young girl's ear and whispered in truth:

"Parting is such sweet sorrow
That I could say good-bye
Till it be morrow."

He hated to leave her; he would have liked to go on with her to a new and better life. She was sincere and true and beautiful, and that she loved him he saw quite well. This girl was his affinity; every throb of his bosom had its response in hers. He seemed to have known and loved her always, and as he gazed into her eyes his wandering unfixed heart knew it could go no further.

Crawford was in exquisite torture. To him the night was interminable, a lengthened-out eternity. The secret of their love lay like an open book under his eyes; it was perhaps more plain to him than to themselves. He saw then lingering at the meeting, lingering hand in hand on the road, looking eye to eye in unmistakable silence; he understood distinctly

how every straw was clutched at to lengthen out the last moments together. It was terrible to bear, but he had set himself to bear it, and he braved it out.

As he paid his jarvey he asked him carelessly if he hap-

pened to know that other carman's fare.

"Faith, I know him; sure he's the livetenant. We all know him—young Master Deloney—ye know, sure."

"The linen people?"

"Yis, them. He's the handsomest, clivirist, yung gent evir set a hip on a car-cushion, but he's the divil hisself way the ladies."

Crawford gave him an extra shilling and turned away up Shankhill with a heavy heart. He knew the Deloneys by report; they were the linen Lords of Ulster, the merchant princes of the world's linen trade. He knew now where he had seen the young swell; he remembered the incident distinctly. He had been chosen with some others from the Island to fix up in Sir Edward Harland's dining-room a magnificent model of one of the White Star liners. A distinguished company had been in the house at the time, and they came and talked with the workmen a few minutes while inspecting the model. Deloney was among them, dressed in his uniform. Crawford had noticed him particularly, partly because of his red coat, partly because he gave the men a sovereign amongst them for a drink. Now he was here with Molly; come to take her, come to oust him with his good looks, his money, his high standing in society; he felt the differences in their positions, felt that in the girl's eyes he would be nobody beside him. Just now he hated to remember she was a baronet's grand-daughter; she, his beautiful snare. He wandered up the road far by the city houses up toward his old home hills he fought for his freedom, sought like another Samson to shake off this fetter; but, alas, alas, it was in his heart, in his mind, in the fibre of his very being; he was as other men weak in very verity concerning this girl of his heart. It was terrible, simply terrible to be so, after what he had witnessed, but so it was, and the pain and mortification humiliated him even in his own eyes.

He wandered on and on up Ballygomartin, far from the din of the city, far from sight of her, far from the bloody street at his door-step, far from reporter and detective and everything, just to be at peace upon the hill-side with the silence of the night around, with clatter and question out of his ears. Alone with his own heavy heart that wondered how the future would be faced, that cowed before its bitterness and shifting scene; some men could say:

"If she be not fair to me,
What care I how fair she be."

But with him it was different. No matter how she treated him, no matter what her feelings toward him, he had surrendered himself too hopelessly, too long for anything to alter. There lay the sting; he could not get away from it. As the night wore on he flung himself down at the foot of Divis Mountain, dejected, crushed, heart-broken, every fond hope blackened and charred. He longed for morning, longed to be back at his work, yet shivered as he remembered the gladness, the light spirit that fired him as he stood at the bench last week. That was taken away; a something that stabbed him at every turn was here instead. His thorn in the flesh had sprung up; perhaps most people carry it unknown to the world; he must carry his. His excitement lessened as the dull drear hours of midnight crept away; he nerved himself, determined to be a man, to carry his gnawing fox gallantly and firmly; he knew it would be a trial to work with a leadened soul, to work simply to please his master, simply to earn his weekly wages. He had never worked solely on these grounds; his one aim had been advancement for Molly's sake. How would he take up hammer and saw and plane without that incentive? Here was the torture, here the exquisite touch that wrung him like physical pain; but be was a man, a Shankhill boy, too, and they are all brave lads. Every sense of manhood stiffened as he gathered hmself together to face the morning and the new day. There was much to be got through this day, much that was unusual and distasteful. There was the coroner's inquest, where he was to figure as the principal witness; it was lamentable that his first appearance in public was in connection with this unfortunate affair; he shrank from it with an inner and fearful shrinking, yet he must go.

As the dawn drew on he resolved to go to his work; he could work a quarter day and still be in time for eleven

o'clock.

During the riots it was the custom of the Islandmen in the district of Shankhill to meet at Agnes Street corner, a street

about the middle of the road, at five o'clock in the morning and march in a solemn phalanx down the big road and on into the city and over the Queen's Bridge to their work. These men were armed, some with heavy crow-bars, some big clubs of hard wood, others with picks and bars of cold steel, others with anything handy they picked up about the yard, all deadly-looking weapons. They were armed thus, and marched together thus for protection and safety; single men had been dragged down some of the bad lanes of. North Street and half killed. It was common for pokers and delt and stools to be flung out at mer. as they marched past; but nobody dared to come to close quarters as they held their way together, a big solid block of men that might menace even trained troops. The Shankhill Road people were proud of them, and truly they made a fine sight marching about twenty deep compact and square, sometimes singing lustrly and waving the Union Jack; many a hearty cheer went with them in the morning and welcomed their return in the evening. The low Roman Catholics called these men the Orangemen. but that was not true; they were simply the working men off the road-fitters, joiners, platers, recters, engineers, labourers, etc., who perforce must protect their own lives now that the police were withdrawn.

Crawford was afoot in the very early hours. He always walked in the front row of this squad; he was not going to his lodgings, he would just go on to his work as he was. He was wearing his Sunday clothes; seeing that the inquest was a few hours further on, he didn't care, yet lest the fellows would laugh, he took off his collar and tie, and put them in

his pocket.

When the men neared the Queen's Island numerous notes were made of Crawford's presence by unsuspected, unnoticed detectives. His absence from home all night had been strongly commented upon. Hour by hour these agents of the law and order had hung about his lodging, wanting nothing but to question and question, and hear the young man go over and over the same story. It was noted as a suspicious circumstances—something very bold—for any man to dare to be out when an emissary of the authorities paid him such a compliment as to ask the reiteration for the hundredth time of a sordid tragedy. Now that he was seen entering the Island gates the shade of triumph crossed their minds, for it

was more than half expected that Crawford had bolted, though why he should do so these men took no time to find out. In official circles a steady, baited dissection of the young man's story was going on. Somehow it was not quite credited, although no one dared to say so, but the detectives

had strict instructions to keep an eye on him.

They saw him going to his work. They dare do nothing, for the turning of a straw, a breath, an ugly look, a half-whispered suggestion, would raise the Island. If these men made a riot the bits of party frays up Shankhill and Falls and in the Brickfields would be as child's play. So the authorities moved with extreme caution, and Crawford was watched and half suspected with a reserve that was absolutely necessary. As the hours wore on nearer the time of the inquest Crawford became again nervous; he looked haggard and ill. The want of his sleep, the excitement, his strange inner dislike to appear before the Coroner and the big wigs of the city, made him feel uncomfortable. A few work-mates from the carpenters' shop were going with him to keep him in countenance. The inquiry was to take place in the old morgue. The sun was beaming in a molten sky; it licked the young man's eyes and brow and face in cruel glare; he tried to hide from it, but the fierce sunlight pursued him the whole way down Oueen's Road. At last the morgue was in sight; the young man was faint and ill; a queer oppression hung upon his mind that he could not shake off.

### CHAPTER IX.

THE Morgue, small and stuffy was crowded, while outside there was a solid mass of people, solders lined a passage and challenged every one who ventured to enter, few but those who had business were allowed to pass in to the inquest. The first preliminaries were got over slowly and officially, every juryman viewing the ghastly corpses lying beyond there in the morgue. The first evidence was of identification, then came the medical depositions as to the causes of death. Richard Brown died of hemorrhage of the lungs and Patrick Dogherty from violence. Then followed a minute description of the wounds, the condition of the internal organs, and so forth.

Crawford listened, and as the doctor lineared over every detail he seemed to see the lad gasping has last gasp, and the old man vomiting the bright red blood. His face grew ashen. The time for him to speak had come; he stepped forward like a corpse; only by a master effort he got out the story he had told so often since dawn on Sunday morning. His nervousness and collapse were palpable to everyone. When the next witness had finished, something of a sensation caught the court, and every eye was fixed on Crawford. This man swore, and quite truly, that he saw Crawford bending over young Dogherty with the knife in his hand.

Crawford was recalled, and again entered the witness-box. He admitted having the knife in his hand, and related briefly how it came about, adding in a cold impassive voice that never in his life had he seen either of the men until that night.

It, we misleading are appearances, yet our conclusions are mostly drawn therefrom; the young man felt that a black pall was flung round him that he was powerless to throw off. The eyes of every soul in the room, except those of his own shopmates, gazed at him with a cold, dubious stare. Nobody believed him, the silence that is full of doubt fell about; when next the Coroner spoke it was about the runaways Crawford averred did the deed. There was no corroboration that any

such crowd or mob had been on the scene at all. None of the many witnesses had seen anyone but Crawford himself. The finding was that Richard Brown had died from hemorrhage of the lungs, and that Patrick Dogherty from the severing of the jugular vein, inflicted by some person or persons at

present unknown.

Nobody was satisfied, but the coroner's inquiry could go no further. Everyone knew there would have to be a thorough investigation. As the court broke up Crawford, with white lips, stood surrounded by his companions, a certain sinking at his heart, a presentiment of approaching calamity held him in its grip. He tried to shake it off as he moved toward the door, but the detective laid his hand on him with the ominous charge.

"I arrest you on suspicion of the murder of Patrick

Dogherty."

The blow had fallen; it had scarcely fallen unexpectedly; something had taken the heart out of him; something like doom had clapped her black wings beside him warning his

spirit to expect evil. It had come.

His companions could do nothing; they saw their young foreman led off; a cab was requisitioned, and before the big, seething crowd without got wind of it, Crawford was on his way to Crumlin Gaol. He glanced as he passed through the gates toward the big black beam that had oppressed him so forcibly driving by last night. Then Molly, everlasting Molly, calm, sweet, lovely, like a mirage of the desert, rose before his tired eyes.

Ill news travels fast, and presently the fact of Crawford's arrest leaked through to the dense mass awaiting the Coroner's verdict. A scene of the very wildest confusion prevailed as the masses swayed and shouted, and cheered and cursed. Stones flew like hailstones, and the crowds understanding that in some way the police had managed this arrest in spite of them, gave vent to their outraged feeling

in fearful, deafening cry,

"Down with the peelers! Down with the jukes!-no

buckshots, no Tipperaries for the North!"

This latter referred to the large draughts of country "gulls," as the people called them, that had been sent up to quell the riots, instead of the local police. The infantry charged with their bayonets, then a detachment of dragoons

lying back in one of the side alleys cleared the streets. As the crowds scattered the word "rescue" passed from mouth to mouth, and the mob headed toward the jail, but the dragoons were close upon their heels, and every group was

dispersed.

Before dinner-time the whole populace knew, and the wildest excitement prevailed. Belfast is a curious city. Broadly speaking, the entire inhabitants divide themselves into two classes, the Unionists and the Nationalists, or if the name answers better, the Protestants and Roman Catholics, i.e., broadly speaking, a few Catholics hold with the Unionists, a few Protestants hold with the Nationalists, but the city really divides itself into these two sections. This fact is well emphasized when a great riot occurs; every party falls to their own side—sticks up for it through thick and thin.

Now Crawford had the sympathy of the whole Protestant community; nobody who knew the young man would believe such a charge; the entire Shankhill was boiling with wrath and his workmates on the Queen's Island were ready for anything. His cause was already theirs. The Roman Catholic party were wild over the murder of young Dognerty, and swore by all that was high and holy they would be avenged; by the tone of their Press they really believed that the prisoner, to say the least, had some hand in it. There seemed to be a tinge of party colour in the affair that made the interest more striking. These old party outbreaks that used to seethe up and down Belfast are now rarer and rarer, yet the old bigotry, the old tense feeling, that flows deep in every citizen dies hard; the people breathe it in with the air, as children they repeat with keen relish that game that was played in grim earnest ages ago. Ranged in two rows, fierce in broom sticks, tin kettles, and paper hats, one battalion sings boldly:

"We be all King James' men, The loyal and the true."

which is met with the ringing chorus:

"We be all King William's men, To die and no surrender."

Alas, that the child's game has often been repeated with no uproarious mirth for a finish—but wounds and prison and death.

Belfast was stirred to its centre, the streets never slacked the whole night, vast mobs filled the Shankhill and Falls roads and the brickfields that lay between, every one held their breath, awaiting the outcome of the unborn hour—for an hour—yea the next five minutes might mean—a riot, such as had never stained the annals of the city. The soldiers were in the side streets ready; the authorities wisely did not tantalize the people with their superior force, but held them adjacent, yet out of sight as much as possible; so the night wore on, crowds wild and threatening, moving up and down, full of tension, eager and disturbed. Nothing, perhaps, gives one the impression of repressed fury as a baited multitude, but nothing happened. The small hours crept away, the undaunted spirits still holding out until the morning was well on, but that night of threatening passed.

Crawford was brought before the magistrates next day, and was again remanded pending further investigation. Now Crawford, although friendless in a sense, for his own people had all joined the majority, was not without friends. His own shop and a few others from the different yards on the Queen's Island met to discuss his case. In this big firm one thing has always stood out clear, that the men "back" one another, and Crawford was well liked; many a poor chap he had "spoke for," for many a one who took a "half 'un' too much he kept his job, instead of giving him the sack; at a crucial moment like this, these little things are well

remembered.

A fund was immediately started, then a deputation selected to wait upon one of the managers to ask him to be their head and director in this affair. The man they approached was approachable, and also knew Crawford from the time he had come to the firm a young lad. In fact the young foreman was looked upon as one of the model working men of the firm, and the managers of the Queen's Island in those far off days were proud of men like these and knew them.

Mr. Huntley, with scarcely a second's hesitation, accepted the honours of the occasion. His first decision taken, he being a business man, acted promptly, and went immediately to the prison to visit Crawford, and talk the affair over care-

fully.

The meeting between these two men, who mutually admired one another, was characteristic. Crawford, fully alive to his position in his broad, respectable view, feeling that to be suspected was degrading, coloured to the roots of his hair with shame. He rose deferentially, but his heart thumped proudly when the other held out his hand. He muttered something about the kindness, but the gentleman hastened at once to explain that he had not come on his own initiative, but as a representative of his own work-mates.

"I am very sorry Crawford and will do all for you

I personally can, but I am come specially from the men."

It was a proud moment for Crawford, almost worth coming to jail for, just to know that the brave fellows who wrought day in, day out, beside him, would do this; fellows who had not a penny in the world but the pay they earned, but who had the hearts of gold, the jewel that is scarcer than diamonds. Here they were coming to his help, sending the manager and opening a fund.

A great lump came into his throat; at that moment he would have liked to have taken the hard horny hand of every one

of them and put it into his bosom.

James Huntley was a keen, up-to-date business man; he had had much experience of men and matters, both at home and abroad. He prided himself on his own renetration, and could see as far into a stone wall as any son on the face of the earth. He searched Crawford's face as a counsel might, hoping to wring falter or guilt out of a prisoner at the bar, but Crawford stood that sharp scrutiny without a flinch

"Tell me-everything," said Huntley, in a low, quick tone,

without shifting his eyes.

Crawford did so, and the manager listened intently; when he stopped there was a pause. Huntley, watching his face closely all the time, darted out:

"Why were you not in bed at that late hour?"

The young man flushed scarlet, and his questioner noticed it; he paused slightly, then answered:

"I was looking over a letter."

"Letter! Love-letter?"

It was one of those chance shots that hit the mark, Crawford bowed, but he did not lower his gaze. He was too honourable to deny the truth, yet he was vexed and disconcerted that this was touched upon. The idea opened a new vista to the keen manager, his eyes fell and he stroked his beard meditatively. He had often noticed the young carpenter's application; he was so whole-hearted, took such an unwonted interest in his work, that he seemed not to have

a wish beyond it; he had gradually come to think that he was one of those few steady, quiet men who find satisfaction in their work. Here were love letters and their suggestions. An Eve and an apple-tree, and the sure and true break-up of the young man's career. It had ever been thus, and so perhaps it must continue unto the end; he was on the right track: the woman lay in the background of the whole trouble.

"Love letters," he murmured half to himself.

Crawford moved uneasily, he shrank sensibly from a close discussion of the point. His hesitancy did not escape the man he was dealing with. Huntley drew himself up, and in his quick, businesslike style, spoke decidedly and unmistakably.

"Crawford, there must be no beating about the bush. I must see that letter, I must know about this woman and the

part she plays in this affair.

"Believe me, sir, she plays no part whatever; she is utterly ignorant of it."

The gentleman made a gesture of annoyance.
"Who is this woman?" he said sharply.
Crawford was silent, he began to pace the cell uneasily, and the gentleman looked at him in grim uncompromise. There was no getting away from those eyes. Crawford was in a tight place; he dare not associate Molly with this horrible affair, yet he read Huntley's look, something in it impeached him to his face.

"Who is she?" Huntley repeated in the tone that matched his lock.

Crawford came to a dead stop before him.

"I will tell you," he said in a clear voice, "not as the head of a deputation, not as a chief of the firm, but as man to man if you ask now."

"Go on," said the manager bluntly, "go on." "She is Bennett's the store-keeper's daughter."

"The store-keeper's daughter," he repeated icily, then

recalling something he looked up sharply.

"That girl-Bennett's wife, I mean, was a lady, I knew her personally, such a marriage; and you know her daughter, Madalina Lyle's daughter. Why, less than twenty years ago she was one of the leading beauties of local society. What is the daughter like?"

"Nice," returned Crawford, groping for a description of Molly.

"So you know her. Have you known her long?"

"Since we were children; she was reared with her grandfather, Old Phil Bennett, on the mountain road beside my father's. I have known her a very long time.

"I suppose you are engaged."

"No," returned Crawford slowly, his colour heightening as he remembered the years of unspoken promise that lay between them. Then suddenly unbolting the barriers of his heart he told Huntley the contents of that little note and the

whole affair of Sunday night with Deloney.

Huntley lowered his eyes; he knew the young carpenter would speak fuller and freer unwatched, and as he went on the older experienced man saw how the land lay with Lis young friend; such love was almost profane, there were few women in the world worth it. He was acquainted with the gav lieutenant, and, as a man of the world, could pass over much that to the well-doing, upright, honest working man was serious, he tried to make light of the little a sode; of course, it was not pretty of the young lady, but women had to be excused for things like that. It was in their nature to treat men after this fashion.

"You are acquainted with this young gentleman." said

Crawford slowly, "is it true that he is fond of women."

"I am sure it is," returned the other blandly, "most men are."

"I mean—well, you can guess what I mean. I'm afraid

for Molly. I would not like-him to harm her."

For a second the manager saw, with Crawford's eyes, the gay young dog rushing about enioying himself at any cost; saw the danger of the girl. The condition of the young carpenter was very evident, and the tremor in his soul. In a dim way it brought back a long-ago of his own, when his whole being was knit up in blue eyes and golden hair; his later love-making had none of the rare charming colouring of that early brilliant moment, when Heaven opened in the sweet illumination of a maiden's smile. Were Crawford's feelings like his had been, nay they were intenser, he was only a boy, Crawford was a steady earnest-minded man. He offered to try and smooth matters over between this girl and himself, but Crawford refused.

"But if anything happens to me," he went on, "save her, if possible, from Deloney. I feel within me that he would only

fling her off—he would never marry her."

Huntley promised, and their tête-à-tête was interrupted by the arrival of a solicitor, and the three went over the whole ground discussing the pros and cons from a legal standpoint.

# CHAPTER X.

Some few days later, Huntley chanced upon Lieutenant Deloney in the Belfast Club. The young soldier was in the billiard room watching the balls rolling with an inattentive gaze. He was still perturbed in his mind, still angry at fate or fortune, or whatever carsed thing made Miss Bennett a mill-girl. Even the happy recollection of her beauty and soft charming manners could not soothe him. He could not get over the mill; it was continually recurring to him and making him savage. He was vexed more than he had ever known himself to be. She was outside, hopelessly outside, the pale of his world, farther from him than if she were a ballet dancer. He could understand a ballet girl, but there was something dreadful about the mill that he could not tolerate.

Amid these disappointing cogitations Huntley found him lounging lazily against the black marble mantel, a cigarette between his teeth, and his eves following sleepily the scarlet

balls racing to and fro.

"Why, Deloney, how do do!"

"Hello, old fellow; hope you're well. Have a cig?" holding out a cigar shrine of ebony and gold.

"Thanks," helping himself. "Have a drink?"

They lounged over to one of the little tables. Huntley was a man who liked a little wine; he enjoyed it without that terrible afterwards that excess brings. All his pleasures were so regulated. He was never known to be drunk, yet he had the happy knack of not refusing fellowship. When the two were seated at a marble slab they dabbled slightly into this and that.

"Anything on the Downpatrick Steeplechase?"

"Five," said Denny.

" Only!"

"Every fellow is not a manager in the biggest shipbuilding concern on earth."

"I think not," laughed Huntley. He was not the man to resent a reference to his position or depreciate the fact that he was a business man, and Denny was familiar enough with him to be able to make it without it being considered a breach of good taste. They continued talking lightly of little items of the sporting world going over some details of the late races at the Maze; settled it between them that the roping was the most brazen ever witnessed upon any course. Denny was a little warm over it because he had lost smartly, and beside that he had had a lady friend with him, and somehow his people at home had heard of her, and Denny was displeased.

Although loose living enough, he hated little things like that creeping home. Somehow they had an infernal habit of getting there. Now, as Denny recalled this little episode of the Maze, into his mind stole that everlasting, haunting truth—a mill girl—and he knew perfectly well how his people

would take that.

Huntley had a perfect remembrance of the little dark-eyed, high-coloured, good-looking girl Deloney had with him on the occasion, and considered this a most suitable opening to introduce this girl of Crawford's, for he was resolved to speak to the young lieutenant upon the subject.

"You had a fine girl at the Maze."

"Very," returned Denny. dryly, who had an aversion to

discuss his lady friends with anyone.

"You generally manage to pick up the only good-looking ones going. Your latest—I mean Miss Bennett—outshines all who have come before. Denny was too well-bred to show either surprise or irritation, but he was really both. It was provoking that he could not go half an hour with a girl but it was all over town; not that he cared, yet it was provoking.

How on earth did Huntley know her? How did he find out

they were acquainted?

"What a pity she is," resumed Huntley, "so very young,

so very handsome."

Denny's lips closed suddenly. Pity; he hated pity. Why did Huntley dare to pity her? He forgot that he had himself pitied her; but, of course, he would do himself what he would not have others do.

"Poor Madalina, foolish Madalina. What a fuss it made

about twenty years ago, and this girl is as like her mother

as two peas.

Huntley had never seen the girl, but she had the gold hair that was famous in the Lyle family, and he struck out from

Denny wondered what he was talking about, yet Madalina was pencilled in his note book. Now that he thought of it. the girl had used it with an inflexion of the voice that he had not understood that night on Carrick Hill. There was some riddle here. Denny was too indolent to puzzle over riddles, so he graciously admitted that his acquaintance with Miss Bennett did not extend to her relations. A delicious idea leapt into his head. She was a lady; she was slumming or playing some other heathenish freik that ladies take up nowadays, persuading themselves they are doing good. He remembered that ring she wore, worth the most part of a hundred pounds; it did not fit in vith mill working.

Huntley looked at him quizzically. "My dear fellow, you astound me."

"Impossible," laughed Denny, "at your age. The fact is. Huntley, our acquaintance is the dearest little romance in the world. How the dickens you unearthed it I can't make out. We met one night down town-by accident, you know."

The murder was out. It did not lower Denny in this gentleman's estimation, but it did not exalt this girl over whom Crawford was breaking his heart. Truly he went back to his own opinion; no woman was worth the genuine, untainted, whole-hearted love that the young working-man was giving this girl.

"That's how it is," he said, slowly stroking his beard. "Nevertheless, you are on very good terms with some of her connexions. There's your pal, Sir Percy Lyle—she is his cousin. Denny was taken back, genuinely glad; his face

flushed pleasantly and his black eyes glowed.

By jove," he murmured. "Yes, and she's like him." No wonder he had felt as if they were not strangers; some familiar, pleasing attraction made him at his ease with her. Of course it was his unconscious recognition of her strain, for she was the prototype of his boon companion, only finer and more delicate, being a girl. So she was of his familya Lyle. He was delighted, relieved; for to tell the truth, in spite of mill working and low life, he was well smitten; but it did not sound well even in his own ears. This was better,

much better. He was confoundedly glad.
"Supposing Sir Percy dropped off," continued Huntley, "Miss Bennett would stand to win a tidy figure; she is the next heir. There was a while he was going the pace."

"But at present," returned Denny, leaning back in his chair with a new cigarette in his fingers, "he is going to

Miss Morrison."

"I thought you were after that game yourself."
"No, faith," laughed Denny.
"Well, I heard it," returned the business man, unconvinced.
"It is not true," answered the young soldier. "Now tell

me about Miss Bennett."

What he was hungering after was to hear that those unpleasant, irritating details about this beautiful girl were only assumed—that it was not absolutely true that she lived up Shankhill, that she was one of the great herd of girls who earn their living in the mill. Already crazy notions of showing her off, leading her in resplendent dress before Mab Morrison, were flying through his vain head. But Huntley could not do this. She was of the poor, nobody in fact; although come of that grand old stock. Only through premature death of the fast young baronet was there a prospect of the girl raising her present status. Denny smiled sarcastically. Sir Percy would not give in his gun so easily; young life was tough. The idea of exhibiting Molly for Mab's delectation died as abruptly as it had been born. He was vexed, for it would have pleased him to have honoured Mab in that way.

The bare, bald fact remained, qualified a little, but after

all she was a spinning-girl.

Huntley took leave and went deliberately toward Shankhill. He saw plainly that the young lieutenant was gone on this girl too, and wondered what was in her to attract two men of such different characters. He resolved to hunt her out and see for himself. Evidently she was not hard to approach when she took up to Deloney on the street.

He had no trouble finding the Bennetts; they were well known. Molly's beauty was already famous, and Phil's nightly resort to the public-house made him notorious. Huntley walked straight to the house. The street door was open, the inner door was also open. He tapped slightly;

it was unresponded to; advancing over the three feet hall he stepped in. Molly was sitting on a low stool in the kitchen or living room, a sleeping child upon her lap. She was bent forward over it, her face averted, her eyes wide open, but oblivious to the smoke-dyed ceiling they were fastened on. Her face was full of delicious engrossed abstraction; her magnificent hair hung in confused graceful grandeur over her shoulders. The girl had forgotten her environment, her own dishabille; forgotten, too, the terrible calamity that had overtaken Crawford. She was seeing again the sweet country, the brilliant stars, the bent cager face of her companion; she was listening to the soft phrases, the love poetry of his voice again; anticipating the approaching evening when they were to go out again. He was to take her up Malone; she had never been there, and it would be all new and beautiful. They were to drive to Shaw's Bridge, then walk back by the edge of the River Lagan; it was the prettiest outskirt of the city, the water was so limpid and calm, the little sculls and canoes floated by without a quiver. Then they could have curds and cream at M. Ward's Locks, the car meeting them again at Stranmillis, and it would be a delightful, happy time. Denny had painted it for her, and every lineament was stereotyped on her brain.

Huntley held his breath. The entire picture was startling in its unstudied, unconscious native easy beauty. Never had he seen a more entrancing girl. She was so fresh and unspoiled, unconscious of the power of her own fascination, a rarely lovely young human blossom just opening to the sun of Life. Never afterwards could he forget the beautiful tableau vivant he dropped upon in the little back street house

off Shankhill.

Molly suddenly had an acute feeling that somebody was looking at her. Her eyes fell hastily; she coloured violently upon seeing the stranger, apprehensive lest he had gazed into her sour and perhaps seen there the image of her quivering new-born love.

### CHAPTER XL

THE girl rose hastily and bowed. Huntley also bowed, murmuring apologies for his abrupt entrance. She invited him to a chair, then with a quick excuse vanished into the little

room with the sleeping child.

A wild glad hope had risen in her that this gentleman was one of the Lyles. A deep, half-smothered expectancy lived in her bosom that yet they would do something for her, no matter how little, for her poor mother's sake. But the manager, in his quick, abrupt way, dashed at once into his business.

"My name is Huntley. You have no doubt heard of me?"

"Mr. Huntley of the Oueen's Island?"

Yes, she had heard of him. Every native of Belfast had, from the newsboy down, from the newsboy up. Often had his name been on her father's lips and on her friend Crawford's, but why came he to her? What business had he, the big ship-building man, here?
"I have called," said Huntley, as if answering her

thought, "to oblige William Crawford."

"Ah! poor Willie."

Her dark magnetic eyes fixed on Huntley. "You can save him," she said, pointedly.

"Not I, my girl, but you."

Her eyelids drooped, quivering, and the slow round tears gathered and rolled down her cheeks. This calamity that had submerged Crawford had hurt her as nothing in her young life had ever hurt; her friendship, her love for her old comrade was wounded and stricken. That evening they last parted was continually before her; she was really vexed now that she had not put Deloney off instead of him. The blank days Crawford spoke of had been many more than he anticipated; but what could she do to free him, what to loose the shackle that had fastened itself about him. That he was innocent of this crime she had no manner of doubt, but nevertheless she saw no way to help. She felt completely powerless before the calamity and hideousness of the thing. She looked at Huntley. Surely if any human being could do anything, here was the man—influential, rich, clever—a go-ahead man that had risen above all obstacles in the calling of his life; who stood on the very highest niche that success could reach; who had lifted not only himself but his firm to the proud and princely position before the eyes of the world. These two, the girl on the lowest rung of life, the man on the highest, measured each other in silence. Then Huntley laid his hand gently but deliberately on her arm.

"He wants you," he said softly.

She lifted her dark eyes, trembling with new coming strength. "Tell me, can I do anything?"

"You can do everything. First you must fire him with

hope; you must raise his spirits."

"Will they hang him," she breathed darkly.
"No, my dear; do not harbour that for a second. We will

liberate him-you and I."

Huntley watched her narrowly. In spite of that affair with Deloney he believed she really cared for the young foreman; but it is possible even for a successful ship-builder to make a mistake, and Huntley mistook the girl's sincere sisterly grief for that other deeper and warmer affection.

"It is outrageous," said Molly warmly, "to charge him; he is so generous, so kind; besides, he is really good.

could never stain his hand with blood."

No. but the years were yet uncome; the years with their pleasure and pain, years over which she was to reign-thenah, then—the dark. Dark, which was maybe to continue unto the end.

"Whom do you believe guilty?" queried the gentleman. "Brown, of course," returned Molly. "You see, he had a reason to hate him."

"What reason?"

"His daughter," answered the girl softly, with lowered eyes. "All the Shankhill people knew about poor Jessie."

"You saw Crawford shortly after the crime-on Sunday

night."

"I did not," she answered, unmoved.

He knew perfectly she had not, but he thought he would

let that shot off in her face to see how she took it.

"Pardon me," returned the gentleman, "details are confused. Crawford said something about Sunday night. In any case you must come and see him in prison. I have come specially to make arrangements for your visit." He had taken this upon himself, assured of his own wisdom, and wishing to do a good turn to both parties. The issue would probably have been better if he had not bothered, and the great drama of their lives unplayed. Molly complied without the least hesitation. She was only too willing to do any little thing for Willie possible. She thanked Mr. Huntley warmly, satisfied that he was the most generous and kindhearted of men; but still Crawford was worth it, for he had been faithful and true for many years to the Queen's Island. Mr. Huntley arranged to take her to the prison the next day. He was fully assured that Crawford would be delighted, and that at least it would smooth a side issue during the trying time that was before the young man. One thing he really believed, that was, that her true affection was Crawford's. He could not understand the young lieutenant daring to speak to her on the street, for he found her a lady in her bearing and speech. Of her beauty there could be no question; she was a Lyle in every lineament of face and figure.

After his departure Molly found herself comparing Crawford and Deloney. The two men seemed to stand up before her. It was treason that another should stand beside Crawford, but he stood clearly and definitely and distinctly. The girl tried to draw the distinction between her love for these men, but the outline did not please her. It was sin that he—this other—had the glowing colour, the all-absorbing large place. The merry past about the hillsides, the hearty, happy hours up the Shankhill—everything concerning this long comradeship lost its salt in comparison with Lieutenant

Deloney.

The truth was plain; there was no getting from it, the voung lieutenant had enthralled the very heart of her, and Willie—dearest Willie—truly she did love him too, but it was not the same Yea, it was different, very greatly different

Her whole being seemed revolutionised, and the place Crawford tried to hold was not for him. What place could he have now? Their old constant delightful companionship seemed to dim away—

"Things may be as they have been But never as at the first."

## CHAPTER XII.

MR. HUNTLEY made arrangements, and in the morning he hastened up Shankhill with his brougham. The girl seemed to him in the strong morning light as beautiful as she had the evening before Little deemed she that the elderly gentleman sitting opposite her was strutinising her with a fierce exactitude a younger man might not have thought of. Huntley was much delighted at his little diplomacy. went forward alone to acquaint Crawford that Miss Bennett

"I hope you are quite well, my dear fellow."

"How very kind," returned the young carpenter, holding out his hand in a hearty way, for he was flattered that Huntley had come so soon again

"I bring a visitor, Miss Bennett," said Huntley in his

quick way.

Crawford was taken back; a quick burning flame dyed his manly face. This was unexpected; a thrill ran through him. he could not decide whether of pain or pleasure.

"I cannot see her," he said after a brief pause.

"What folly," returned Huntley "You must not blast her love and your own because of a silly caress."

"Silly caress!" and his lips broke into a curl of sarcasm

"It was nothing of the kind."

"Put her to the test," said Huntley in his abrupt way. "I have brought her for you to do so."

"You are most kind, but I want to get away from the whole thing."

"You are too previous. Ask her; I am going now." He walked out quickly, leaving Crawford, almost unclone, yet a ray of hope like a tiny sunbeam came stealing to him. All the morning he had been thinking of her-seeing that whole Sunday night over again. One certainty was his now; Deloney was a bad character for any girl to be with, especially one of Molly's beauty and position. He had ferreted out from his solicitor enough of the young soldier's character to conclude so. Such was the man she put before him.

The young girl came in eagerly, smilingly, both hands outstretched, glad to come to him, impatient to tell him she believed in his innocence, a hundred words struggling on her lips for utterance. She was too full of excitement to notice the dreary cell, the dazzling white of the walls, the penetrating text:

"Thou God see'st me," that came starting from every corner. The bare, empty, punishing appearance of the cell was lost on her as she rushed forward with that long-known

name upon her lips.

"Willie."

They were alone save for the warder outside in the corridor. Mr. Huntley had gone to the Governor, with whom he was

well acquainted, for a chat.

Crawford stood quite still, every nerve tense. In the first raw moment the brute deep down in him reared; he felt like gripping her, and crushing this thing that had played him false out of her. Why had she dared to come before him with her beauty, with seeming solicitude and empty words. How dare she look him in the face after Sunday night. They looked at each other as they had never looked, he almost glaring, she with the warm glowing greeting frozen in her teeth.

His silence, his repressed wrath, the horror in his eyes struck her. Her hands fell; she had a woman's keen divination of men, and perceived at once a change too markedly personal to be attributed to the charge hanging over him. He had withdrawn himself; he was withered toward her; she rebelled at it, her young unquelled spirit fired at the idea. He himself had taught her to look upon him as her friend, her great, great

friend. Why did he send for her to greet her so?

Crawford stood still silent, noting the fading of the fond regard in her eyes, the cooling of her warm approach, and as the swift colours swept her face he wondered how she would feel when he told her he knew all. The awkward, painful restraint was hard to break, a lump was gathering in Molly's throat and tears of mortification welling up, but she bit her lip and held them in control bravely. Yet it was miserable to be so near and yet so far from Willie—her best and dearest friend, in whose place she would gladly stand.

"I\_\_\_I\_am sorry—Willie."

He came forward slowly, and put her into the chair, then

stood, a very Hercules, looking down on her drooped face with the tears hanging on her evelashes.

He was deeply wounded, and could not even for courtesy's

sake assume not to be.

"No-one-can-believe--you did it," she jerked out, making another effort; then looking up, saw his face. rose quickly.

"You are ill."

"No, Molly, I am in perfect health," and he put her down

upon the chair. "You, I hope, are the same."

"I," she returned bitterly, "have no time to be ill; only time to work." Day was when this great open-souled fellow would have gathered her to his breast, whispered that he would work and shield and care for her as long as he lived, lived, but not now. Deloney's lips on hers-ha-. Molly was sorry the moment that complaint left her; she had an acute feeling that it would look si'ly and weak in his sober, steady eyes; besides this was not the time to speak of self. "Forgive me," she murmured, "speaking of myself. I came to sympathise, to assure you I believe in your innocence. Can I do anything to help you, Willie?"

"Molly," he said with blunt earnestness, "what is this that has occurred? What are you hiding from me?" She flushed furiously. Hiding! it had an unpleasant ring. She was not hiding; surely every person had the right to keep their own heart. Crawford watched her closely. On her reply rested his entire future estimate of her; if she told the truth he might forgive her, but if she denied he would hold

her as false as Hell.

The girl was dumb; she clung to her heart Why should she unbare it to any living creature.
"What do you mean?" she asked at last.

"Mean! I mean what I have said. "What are you hiding?

What has been going on behind my back?"

The burning colour in her cheeks burned fiercer, her pulses beat, the latent pride and fury deep down in her womanbreast swelled high, she rose and stood before him.

"You forget yourself. I will not have you speak to me like this. I never did, in the sense in which you speak, any-

thing behind your back."

"What about Sunday night," and a sneer sat upon his countenance, his lips were livid, and his fingers locked and unlocked in his strong emotion. The girl's face blanched; instinctively she felt the beautiful, happy hours of the past few days, the golden dreams of the future were to be broken up; her quivering heart stilled, waiting its doom; it was coming, she knew, and faint in her like a far-off echo rang the untongued cry—Deloney, oh, Deloney. If he were only here to nerve and encourage, this coming stun would not crush her so completely. If girl ever longed for man, she longed for him in this defenceless moment.

"What is it," said Crawford somewhat more softly, "has

risen between us?"

She was speechless; she shrank from voicing in his unsympathetic ear that dear beloved name, Lieutenant Deloney; he and he alone had come between them. She twisted, she looked round the white-washed room toward the door before which the warder passed to and fro. Oh, to run home—to run before he went any farther, it was impossible. It was impossible. She turned on him angrily.

"Why do you harass me with such questions? You have

no right to do so."

"I have the right of a friend. Surely you are not afraid

to tell me."

"Afraid! I afraid?" She lifted her young eyes full of proud scorn "I am afraid of no man—not even you. If you must know then, I was out on Sunday evening with a friend. I have other friends beside you," she added in feminine maliciousness.

"So it appears," he replied in some relief, glad that she

had in a way admitted it.

There was a pause again, the young man full of emotion too deep, almost, for words. He was going to ask her the all-important question; often he had pictured this moment as his happiest, now it was almost pain. Another man had kissed her; she might refuse. The fear of that humiliation put her finger on him, but Crawford was a brave man, and win or lose he would go on.

"Molly," he said bluntly, "which is it to be, him or me? If you have him you can't have me; if you have me you

can't have him."

She looked at him in silence; the great moment had come for her too. Him or me? That was his way of putting it.

Her spirit fluttered in its earthly cage, but he was speaking

again, his words compelled her to listen.

"Will you marry me?" he said in low, tense tones. "There is no need for love-making between us. My whole life, from the day I lifted you from the mountain gully, has been an extended devotion. You are a girl; you cannot have been ignorant of it. I will never speak fully of my affection except to my wife. Will you have me?"

He had taken her hand; it grew cold and damp in his hard honest palm; she turned so pale and cold that he thought she was going to faint. Then the young blood in her veins rushed back hot and excited. She drew her hand from him and covered her face with both her hands. A fierce sudden jar began; one sweet chord recently awakened was

straining and giving out discord.

Give him up, give him up, her handsome young soldier lover. She could never, she could never. Crawford turned away; he was an unimaginative man, but he divined there was a struggle in her heart. Deloney! how he resented that a man of his character had place in her pure though. Which would she prefer? Be it as it would, no hint or syllable from him would influence her; not until her choice was made would he

tell her the kind of man this new friend was.

His wife! It was easy to be Willie's wife, but it was hard to give him up. Why did Crawford never ask her until now? Why did he not ask her before Deloney's kisses thrilled the heart of her and made her yearn to him. If she had never met the young soldier, this moment would have been different. She would have gone gladly to his arms, glad to get away from home, glad of rest and peace in his great strength and protection. Over her rushed her little life, its sunshine, its bit of zest; the power almost to live it had come from the great, true faithful fellow before her; he was true, unselfish, deserving, and her very own. Yes, she knew that, although she had never acknowledged it. Still, to marry him-to give herself to him was a big price, even for long years of tenderness and devoted faithfulness. looked at him, waiting so patiently, so silently on her reply that meant so much to him. He was half turned from her. and the big, brawny figure looked larger and larger and more herculean in the small white cell. There was something so earnest, so real, so void of every trace of meanness or falsity about the man, that in that quick woman way the whole worth of his character flashed upon her. Truly he was A MAN among men, a Prince among peers. The truth came crashing home that she would never get the like of him; she must be happy as his wife. In the newness and flush of the thought she turned to him.

"Yes, Willie."

There was a startling pause, startling in its intensity to both. The man who had been afraid to hope for it almost overpowered, the woman, weak thing, ready to cry out. The instant the words were said she regretted, something within got a death-blow. Crawford looked at her in silent delirium. He had got his promise that he had lived for: he did not even touch her in that first fresh moment of joy. Presently he spoke very low, very gentle; all the harshness died out of his voice, and the tears rushed into the girl's hot eyes. She understood him better than he did himselt.

"Then you love me best, Molly?"

"I would die for you."

Truly, that would be a violent hour, living was a harsh eternity; she did not deem this consent of hers an injury to Crawford, that to marry a man who had not her heart's devotion was a crime, unregistered perhaps in the annals of law, but written often deep and black in the histories of men and women. He, she reasoned, was having his heart's desire while she was sacrificed.

"Die," repeated the young carpenter. "I want you to live for me. Say you love me; you have never yet said so in all our long intimacy."

"I-love-you."

Verily in her way, but she could not meet his eyes, and every word was an effort, the beginning of the far-reaching one she had undertaken.

Crawford considered it modesty, and was glad; he lifted

her hand fondly to his lips.

Again there came a pause full of delicious happiness to him, and of regret to her. He was drinking his draught of delight before saying what he was going to say about Deloney. It was hateful that another man's name must be introduced, but it had to be done; she must be undeceived once and for ever. He asked her plainly when she had to see him again; well he surmised they had not parted on Shank-

hill that night without another tryst. When? This very evening, this was the one; she had been counting up the very seconds, but now she fluttered painfully, understanding somehow that she must not see him again.

"I," she replied, striving to be strong, "will not see him

again.'

He was pleased; he had no inkling of what it cost her to give it up. Why, the very anticipation of going with this young soldier had been happiness. She tried to draw her hand away, but his fingers closed over it firmly. He had a right to hold it now, the right that she had given him, yet even so early she resented it.

"Thank you, Molly, but promise me—swear to me, if accident, chance, circumstances, no matter what brings you into contact with him, not to recognize him. Do not think me jealous, although I'm sure I would be; but it is not for that, not because you are my intended. Were you my own sister, my own daughter, I would demand it."

She looked at him in uncertainty; the pain wild and fierce in her bosom, in some way divined a greater hercer one was coming, she had no suspicion of what, but something was

near, to turn her day-time into dark.

"Molly," he continued solemnly, "understand me, you know me well, I am no liar to you specially, as God is my Judge I have always spoken the plain truth. This man is is not the gentleman you think."

"You are mistaken," she interrupted. "He is a gentleman,

Lieutenant Deloney, Deloney Hall."

"It is himself, not who he is by birth or rank, but himself I'm speaking of. He is a bad man, such a one as the rough

and ready Shankhill boys would scorn and spit upon."

He spoke with all the bitterness and distrust of the workingman for the aristocrat. He could not believe that Deloney might genuinely care for Molly. He could only think of him as the spider enticing the fly.

She looked at him as if turned to stone, her features ashy; the very voice forsook her, the darkness was fallen, her idol was off the altar. Forgive her, she could not love the hand

that threw it down.

"You are a young girl," he went on. "I am a man. I cannot tell you what Deloney is, but as you love yourself, even apart from me, you must never draw breath with him."

A voiceless moan broke from the young girl's heart, a dark, black, dead-like horror seemed to wind itself round and round and smother her. The young man before her knew not she was hurt; he took her to him a limp and resistless thing. Nothing mattered; nothing was of any consequence; everything could be whatever way he fixed it. He lifted her fine white hand, and from it he drew the magnificent ruby-heart. He had looked at this ring as a bit of a toy, when he first bought it, to his child-girl. Now it was to become sacred, the blazing burning emblem of the bond between them.

If she had had energy enough left, she would have resisted his taking her beautiful beloved ring, the only little bit of self-joy, the only glorious thing left to love from her. It was a different ring now. He put it on with a new meaning, every burning blaze henceforth was to speak of him. It had been her own before, her very own; but now it was transformed; she could no longer call it hers; it was his. Willie's

ring. Willie's Red Heart Ring.

The young man gazed at it and her in a sort of proud complacence. He was really happy, really glad; even this murder charge that had to be met and fought dimmed out in his first genuine gladness. He had intended asking Molly how she came to know Deloney, but the distasteful subject had passed from their conversation, and he would not reintroduce it. It was well he did not, for he might have despised her, and his bitterness towards Deloney would have intensified. His were old-fashioned views; a woman's way was narrow, no side-way this hand or that. He knew no man could respect a woman he took up with on the street, but the men who did this sort of thing were lower far in his eyes than the woman. In a man of Deloney's position an act like this could have but one colour for this straight. clean man. But the little episode of their meeting was not gone into, and he drew her to him in a long farewell. girl suffered his caress in silence; she went from him with pale lips and colourless brow. If ever weman carried dust and ashes in heart and soul, Molly Bennett carried them that morning leaving the new gaol.

### CHAPTER XIII.

THE city was in peace. Outward hostilities had ceased, and the autumn lolled away. The military had been withdrawn; the up-country police, who, swelled with conscious majesty, and armed to the teeth, and with the law of the land at their back, had taken a cruel advantage of the undisciplined mob and shot them down like dogs, they too were out of town. So excessive was their savagery that to this day the people gnash their teeth at the memory of it; the old local and loved police were back to their beats, and things were settling into their normal working lines. Never since has the authorities drafted such numbers of strange police into the city; plenty of wise people say this act made the trouble worse. There is no doubt the people resented it, and in the end chased them, rifles and all, off the streets. "The will of the people is the supreme Law." But although the streets were calm and there was no fighting in the Brickfields, or up Springfield, or down York Street, or upon the Falls, or Shankhill, the two sections of the people were struggling hard. Crawford had not been acquitted at the later magisterial investigation. He had been sent forward on the capital charge to the assizes. It was to be a great trial; not the logic of blows was required, but the logic of tongue and mind. Strenuous exertions were being made on both sides. Funds were opened in every district, agents were out night by night collecting the pence and half-pence even of the poorest of the poor. This mass subscription endears a cause to a neighbourhood; the very heart of the people enters into it.

Day after day new startling incidents of the crime appeared in the press appalling the city. Already young Dogherty was enrolled among the heroes of his country. Vaudevilles of his virtues, his devotion to "The Cause," his cruel death, his faith to his Church were sung through sympathetic backstreets to harrowed, weeping audiences. The ballads sold quicker than they could be printed, and the street-singers

during the craze fared, like the rich man in the Scripture,

"sumptuously every day."

Crawford had secured the best legal men of the day. Young Munro was his counsel, the ablest of rising pleaders at the Irish Bar. The instructing attorneys, Harris of Armagh, and John Rea of local fame. "John," as he was locally called, was one of the best-known figures in the Ulster Law Courts. People said John was a bit daft—a daft lawyer is not a rara axis—but had the Law off like A B C. Rea had a ready wit and sharp; many a tedious hour he beguiled for his unhappy client; his conversation was bright and keen, and flew along rapidly. John took an interest in this case; it was one after his own heart. There would be good scope for his quick tongue; nothing was more precious to him than that. He loved a well-fought, stubborn victory, and victory must end this case, especially when he—John Rea—was advising luminary.

His client was in low spirits; legal assurance could not cheer him. He was chafing under the long imprisonment, and the smart remembrances of the investigations before the magistrates did not lead him to expect acquittal at the final

trial.

"If we lose the case?" he inquired.

"Penal servitude."

"How long?"

"Depends on the aspect the case assumes at the trial. Riots—nasty—very nasty," and John Rea ran his fingers through the shock of hair that rose bolt upright from his brow. He had not told his client the darkest ending, there might be if they lost; he knew the young man was low enough without that. As it was, Crawford quailed; he bit his lip in undone silence; the one fearful fact was he had no witness to prove he did not murder that poor boy. The Crown had the ominous evidence that he was seen drawing the knife from his throat. Surely the mists were thick around him. His lawyer tried to rally him.

"There is hope, my boy, in every cup of ill. We always are, 'to be blest.' Live up to that. At your age I would

not have been easily put down."

John at his own age was not easily put down, as any presiding magistrate could attest.

"Young man," he went on, "you must rouse yourself.
We are doing all we can; you must do your part."

Then he lapsed into the legal practitioner, assured his client that the judge and jury would be influenced by his life and character and that the known hatred between the two dead men would help him; no jury would convict on the face of it. Besides, many little things would come out under the crossexamination by the counsel that might change the entire Crawford could not think anything to help him would come out. The police had failed to trace the men who alone could clear him. Although rewards were offered. information was forthcoming, which was not to be wondered at. seeing Crawford was their scapegoat.

He stood without a direct proof, without a single witness of his innocence. His defence hung on his own past character and the known breach between Brown and Dogherty. It was a slender plank on which to fight for life, but the people were

going to fight, and the people swore to win.

But Crawford himself felt the finger of the Law on him. It is easy to hope outside prison walls; it is not so easy inside. The dark, slow, cold days, the heavy, depressing finger on his heart, were hard to suffer. One day, galled and hitter, the half-dead heart leapt into living rebellion. The complete injustice of the charge, the swift boiling wrath at the loss of liberty, called in his soul the stung man to action. A wild resistance—that resistance of the Irishman that has scarcely ever tasted defeat sprang up-and he swore, caged up in that cell that Liberty—Liberty at any cost he would get.

Cold, bleak, windy, dark was the evening. A man, tall and muscular, darted with swift, almost fearsome agility across the public roadway; then round a corner off the main thoroughfare he hugged a dark stone wall that enclosed the him massive county court-house. He had just scouted out of the gaunt building facing it Her Majesty's prison. He ran for life and liberty; perspiration like steam rose from his face, although it was intensely cold, and the winter wind screamed hearsely and bitterly, making howling noises along the telegraph wires. Soon he passed into the back street dimly lighted, at the back of the court-house. was drawn up to the curbstone; the coachman rushed a whip in the runner's face, for so excited was he that he saw nothing.

The carriage was open; he went in, scarcely conscious of what he was doing, and the carriage drove off rapidly.

"Good-bye; if you need a friend, do not forget."

"Can I ever forget, sir, ever thank you for your goodness to me," returned a voice husky with feeling.

"There, good-bye; you will get on I know; keep a good

heart, my boy."

There were a few more earnest mutterings, a quick tight hand-clasping, a "God bless you" from each, and the carriage had but one occupant. The gentleman who left had an engagement to dine at the Imperial Hotel, the big hotel of the city at that time. He rarely broke an engagement either of business or pleasure; to-night he was scrupulous not to deviate from his well-known principle. Left alone—Crawford, for this was he—proceeded to utilise the carriage as a dressing room. He got himself into a suit that was lying conveniently on the cushion, adjusted a grev wig over his closely cropped cranium, then a beard of prosperous dimensions over his chin, stopped the coachman and, dismissing him, stepped into the world in a brand new character.

He turned upon his heel and walked deliberately back the way the carriage had come, then doubling down a side street found himself on the good old Shankhill. He always loved the road and the locality and the working people, and the air that came rattling over the hills so fresh and pure, but never in his experience was the dear old hilly road so delightful as on this cold wild winter night. Oh, liberty, life of men and nations, nothing under the sun is your equal. He found an eating-house and went in. He was hungry, for the last few days had been so nervous that food scarcely passed his lips; to-day he had practically eaten nothing. set before him were not the finest, but he was inclined to call them the sweetest he had ever touched. He drew out of his breast pocket a little satchel to pay the bill. It felt very heavy, and in the mouth there was a small note which ran:

"This is your own money, minus the hundred and a trifle from me. The legal expenses will be covered by the subscription fund."

He was touched deeply, for it was a princely gift; he went

his way, well knowing he had parted from a friend not often

met in this world.

He went on up Shankhill; it was early in the evening, about five o'clock, and the road was, comparatively speaking, empty; the workers from the foundries and huge mills and factories were not "out" yet. He reached the long narrow street with the confronting rows of red brick houses that we have looked at before, and went rapidly down it. As luck would have it, he saw a slender girl hurrying along by the house sides to shelter from the inclement weather. His giant stride overtook her; he laid his hand on her head rolled up in a shawl. She started violently, and looking up flew away with fear.

He called her softly; her excited pulse beat harder. She was too familiar with the voice to mistake it, yet it were against sense and reason to believe that something, Willie. He was locked up in gaol. A nameless tear, a horror rose over her, great beads of sweat started out on her brow. stition of the soil had not floated round her without touching her more or less. This was "somethin," come to warn her that Willie was to be "hung." Plenty of people had seen "things" and got "slaps" and "equeezes" as warnings. Surely that weight on her head had been too heavy to be merely human. She staggered against the house-sides in an agony.

"Molly." If was close to her ear, the accents recalled her scared wits, she looked into the bending face, instead of features wildly aglow, Crawford's earnest eager countenance

antl merry eves beamed on her.

"Wil—lie," she gasped.
"Yes, my dear."

He drew her to him, and at the moment she almost loved him. Her head lay upon his breast in relief and gladness. for she was really glad to see him, and it was good and pleasant to have him again.

"Have they discharged you?"

"How did you get out," she cried in alarm: but rising to

it in a moment she added. "Have you escaped?"
"Something that way," he returned quietly. "Let us go in, my dear; I want to speak to your father; it is too cold for you." They went into the house together.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

PHIL BENNETT'S home was improved greatly since last we were in it. Ever since that summer midnight that Phil promised Molly he had been really trying to break with the drink. Since this trouble had happened to Crawford he had fancied his darling daughter altered, and in his own way was devoting himself to her, trying to hearten and cheer her up. The man was flattered with the girl's praises of his sobriety, and he was beginning to be conscious in his own health and his

own hearth of its good effects.

His wife dare not indulge to her former extent when Phil himself was "scarcely taking anything;" her house, her children, and herself showed a marked improvement. kitchen was clean, the floor newly scrubbed, the hearth-stone whitened, and the fender scoured bright with emery. good fire blazed brightly, filling the apartment with cheer; the children's faces were clean, and their frocks and pinafores tidy. Little Jennie was amusing herself with the bellows, her checks as red as paint; the baby was tied in a little chair happy with a rattle, and the beautiful leaping flames rushing round the kettle hanging on the crane. Mrs. Bennett herself was neat and clean a white apron round her portly figure, an old back comb stuck in her hair, with an effort after gone-by vanity. It was a comfortable enough workingman's home that cold bitter night, with the wind sweeping in icv gusts from the rude old hills. Mrs. Bennett was arranging the tea-things when Molly and her visitor entered.

"Good gracious me," she exclaimed, dropping the teaspoons with a clatter. Crawford came forward laughing, but the matron held aloof until he took off beard and wig. Mrs. Bennett was so shocked that she had to sit down, and

Molly went on with readying the tea.

Presently Phil came in from his day's work. He. too, was surprised at such a visitor, but did not sink under it like his better half. They sat down at the table, hearty and joky, ignoring the anxiety and separation waiting outside at the door. After tea the two men retired to the little room off

the kitchen. Crawford told him his plans, and in a vehemence that was like prayer committed Molly to his keeping until he was able to come or send for her. Phil promised, and they shook hands cordially, the girl's father in turn giving him charges to be good and kind to Molly when she was his wife.

Then they went back to the others, and Crawford sent for wine and sweets and cakes for the children. They drank him good health and good fortune and good journey. Molly sang for Crawford an old song then in vogue which she had often sung in the long summer evenings away up at the top of Shankhill Road, when they and a crowd of other boys and girls had gone up after the day's work for a whiles fun; often they had danced on the open country road for hours, the girls singing between times to the softened accompaniment of the accordion.

"Molly darling, I must leave you."

Crawford loved this song. Sometimes he thought it was because Molly sang it, sometimes because her name was in it; perhaps it was because the music and somment expressed

his own feelings so truly.

Then came good-byes; the little circle was broken never again to unite. Crawford's eyes filled; many an hour and many an evening he had spent in this little home, none perhaps more pleasant than to-night, but the parting of the ways had come. He wrung Phil Bennett's hand hard, and to cover his emotion bent his head and kissed the innocent children. It was a memorable night to him, the last he was ever to spend in a working-man's home up his dear beloved old Shankhill.

Molly was terribly upset; her trembling fingers could scarcely fasten on her best dress-for she was going out for the last time with Willie. As engaged people they had something to say to each other, and there was no "alone-

ness" or privacy before the family.

Outside it was a fearful night; rain had come on, and the wind cut it into one. Crawford was puzzled where they could spend their last hours together; they must go somewhere out of the inclement night. He bethought him of the theatre: it was not the best place, perhaps, for farewells, but at the moment it was the only place he could think of.

"Would you care to go?"

"Oh, yes! she cried, gratified like a child, "but you might

be found out."

"No tear. Belfast would swear I am safe in Crumlin Gaol. Inwardly he decided it would test his disguise; besides, he must accustom himself to mingling with the public in his new character.

Molly was delighted to see the theatre; her only experience of it was a pantomime years ago at the time her tather married again. That pantomime lay in her mind as something unparalleled—the music, the scenery, the gorgeous dresses, the transformation scene. It was indeed a rare treat to go once more to the theatre.

They were early; the house was almost empty and looked big, although really small; the gas-jets beautified everything and made the gilding gold, and the stucco-faces on the cornices and moulding, art. It was warm and comfortable, the curtained doors shut out the wind and wet, and one forgot

the weather.

Crawford rehearsed the piece slightly, his companion listening in eager silence. She was sentimental; the high hope, the wild romance peculiar to early youth were strong and keen in her unblunted soul. It was with unalloyed relish she hung upon Crawford's rendition amid the warmth and hum of floating whispers. He was nearer to her to-night perhaps than he had ever been. She listened in a wakeful trance; then another voice called in her soul—this other voice was different, it had a way of making stories personal, flatteringly personal, that made one blush and feel beloved; to Crawford it was a story good enough in its way, but not of much consequence to anybody. As he continued she was glad that personal sensation had not touched her, for the ending was unfortunate.

They were sitting on the second balcony, those seats that respectable people patronise. Molly watched the house filling, admiring, perhaps envying, the ladies in evening toilette.

Presently the lights went down, the orchestra took their seats, the music struck up. Music in this girl was almost passion as yet undeveloped, but living and waiting nourishment to break forth in sweetness and tenderness. The first bars of the music set her erect and throbbing.

The curtain lifted, the play began. It was "East Lynne." Something quivering, unspeakable beat in the girl's bosom,

that mysterious world of feeling within us all began to revolve upon its axis. When the first act was over Molly was trembling. As the play proceeded the girl became oblivious of her companion, hearing only the bitter sweetness of Sir Francis Levison. Then the Darkness fell, the dark Dark that never had a dawn. Again the Lady Isabel is at East Lynne looking at new living going on there. The strains of that sad melody that recalled a past, that can never be wholly remembered nor yet wholly forgotten, filled the house.

Molly cried—it was for Lady Isabel; but the house cheered to the echo, and a shower of bouquets fell upon the stage. One smaller, yet evidently choice, came like a special tribute atter the others. The actress bowed, accepting it; many glanced whence it came, Molly along with others; she coloured deeply and turned giddy. Lieutenant Deloney had

thrown those chosen petals.

He was in a box at the opposite side of the house along with a crowd of friends-Sir Percy Lyle, Mr. Huntley, Miss

Morrison, and some others.

Presently Molly noticed a lorgnette from this box placed upon her specially. She drew back as much as possible, her face heating. Unaware to her, many glasses from all parts of the house had scanned her, always a noticeable girl. To-night, in the front row of the theatre was no exception. Her beautiful hair, simply braided, shone like spun gold in the dim lights, while her young face, full of interest in the piece, had tinged to Lamartine's delightful description, "pink Mr. Huntley eyed them uneasily; he would not have known Crawford save for Molly. His innermost thought was that this was a bold thing to do.

Molly recognised him too, but refrained from mentioning it to her companion, because Deloney was in the same

company.

Meanwhile Mr. Huntley got nearer Sir Percy Lyle and drew his attention to Molly. He thought it would be nice if he could get the young baronet to do something for his beautiful cousin. The guickest route toward that was that Sir Percy should see the girl, and here she was.

What a fine girl, criticised the young baronet. "Know her?"

"I do; look at her again, perhaps you might, too."
"I; not I. Who the dickens—who?" he broke off in a long stare.

"You do not recognise her?"

"No. Candidly, Huntley, she reminds me of—of our own family," he returned honestly, although hoping she was not his poor relation. He had none of the old rancour toward the girl, but it was unpleasant to have poor relations pointed out to one in public; in ract only Huntley was the man who did so; he would have resented it.

"She is your cousin," returned Huntley, sotto voce.

"Indeed; are you acquainted?"

"I have that nonour," returned he galiantly, "and she is a

very charming young lady."

The young baronet was a trifle uncomfortable, and glanced again toward where Molly sat. Now Miss Mab Morrison, who was a clever girl, noticed him. A moment later he asked her to excuse him and went out to the bar with Huntley. When they were gone Map swept the side of the house critically, and true to her sex stayed her glass on Molly.

"What a face," she murmured, "so classical, yet so radiant." Her eyes fell, she forgot the theatre and Sir Percy Lyle and his sudden curiosity with the upper boxes. She saw the drawing-room at home in the lingering summer lights, herself gay and cheerful, lighting upon Denny before

the magnificent sculpture.

The entire incident came back as her eyes rested on the young girl with the chiselled-out features. She turned her head slowly to Denny. He was making eyes in his own careless way to the actress. The old lingering feeling in her heart withered and shrivelled without the hope of a resurrection. Hollow, worthless, incapable of anything but light, frivolous folly; at the moment she loathed herself for ever entertaining a thought of him. The chaff and the conversation in their box ran high. Denny was slightly apart, busy with the stage; someone referred to him.

"Don't interrupt," said Mab with biting sarcasm. "Denny is doing homage to art. He adores art, especially Greek art, but the Greek specimen is not upon the stage." Everybody laughed, but Denny could have cut the tongue out of her head; but Mab was impervious to his wrath and laughed with the others. Denny presently slipped away; it was impossible to sustain his little flirtation under the scrutiny of the whole company, and as he stood glancing round the house care-

lessly, previous to quitting it, he saw Molly.

His anger at Mab died pleasantly. "I made a mistake, Mab, but I'll right it. How clever you are; you must have seen her. I wonder did you catch the resemblance between that girl and our marble." He went out and lit a cigar, then lounged back to his place in Mab's box. He edged up till he got quite near her; latterly they had not troubled each other much.

"Mab," he said softly, "thank you so much. You have done me a good turn to-night. I would have missed her but for you. Tell me, you are so clever, is Venus or she the more perfect? Look how her colour flashes; that is the girl I was thinking of that evening in the drawing room. Some day I will tell you about her. Who knows you and

I may be friends yet—related I mean.

"I do not understand you," returned Mab, "but to be friend to your friends is a distinction above my ambition,"

and she indicated with scorning eyes the tier above.

"I am sure," he smiled, "I always gave you credit for thinking highly of me and my friends. You will love her for my sake.'

"Despise, perhaps pity," flashed the young lady.

He bowed elegantly and made room for Sir Percy. Mab was not hurt as once she might have been; she was secretly ashamed of her silly infatuation, she sat very quiet for a moment thinking hard; her curiosity was aroused, then turning to Sir Percy Lyle with charming frankness, asked him point-blank if he knew that handsome girl with the golden hair.

"Denny," continued Mab, "has been speaking of her." Sir Percy looked at her.

"What did he say, Mab?"

"He told me," returned Mab in a low voice, "that she is his ideal of woman beauty. He is acquainted with her:

he has been for some time."

Sir Percy bit his lip; he resented strangely this intelligence. Denny and he were chums and knew a good deal about each other, and he would have preferred the gay young lieutenant not to be acquainted with his poor unknown but beautiful cousin.

"Mab," he answered slowly, "that young girl's name is Bennett, and she is my late aunt's daughter. I myself do not know her; she has just been pointed out to me; she is

my cousin.

Mab's dark eyes fell with a sudden drop. She was vexed at her question, and now Denny's words carried a decided meaning. The rest of the evening was markedly quiet; a restraint fell between them. Sir Percy was conscious of it, but attributed it to himself, for he was slightly embarrassed at this unlooked-for happening in the theatre.

#### CHAPTER XV.

DELONEY had not seen Molly since that Sunday night; she had broken their tryst. Many, many evenings he had lenered at the place hoping she would come. When this became hopeless he sat down and wrote a beautiful letter, which, to his surprise, was returned next post. He could not understand such treatment and wrote to say so, this time making the pretty addition of some flowers; flowers and all came back. He was taken back; he could not understand why she did this. For any woman to resent his advances was novel; but that this Shankhill girl did so was stranger than fiction. He had never got the chance to speak to her. To-night he would do so, and he was very much pleased indeed that she was in the theatre. He cared nothing for the old fogey who accompanied her; he would watch for her going out, and go up and speak to her as he would to any other friend.

Meanwhile Crawford was getting restless. Time, ever shod with Mercury's sandals, had flown. He had meant to

say so much and as yet nothing was said.

"We must go, my dear; it is almost ten. The Galvanic sails at eleven, and I have to take you home."

"Just a few moments--poor Isabel--I would like to hear

her last words with her husband."

"He forgives her," murmured Crawford, smiling into her interested eyes. He allowed her those few moments; how could he refuse her anything? The girl was so young, had such keen new delight in the stage that even the sudden vision of Denny could not quite spoil it; yet his conduct to the actress had stung her to the quick; his flowers, his love-letters to herself were things of yesterday. True, she had refused them and left him free to proffer them where he pleased; nevertheless it hurt her to see him paying tribute to the stage.

She had grasped her own position boldly, and broken in every way that offered with him. She was another man's promised wife; she was determined to have done completely and entirely with Deloney. No one knew the bitterness of making or keeping that determination but herself. The moments were gone; Crawford brought her down the badly lighted stairway. He left ner in the vestibule a second while he went out for a cab. The rain was coming down in torrents, and it would have been impossible to walk home even had there been time, which there was not.

Denny was waiting at the stair-foot. He was in evening dress, the picture of elegance and fashion; his lavender-gloved finger touched his moustache delicately; he saw her com-

panion leave and went forward beaming.

"Miss Bennett—my dear Miss Bennett, I am—am"—she stared straight before her and ignored his outstretched hand.
"What is this for?" he breathed, "At least in justice tell

"What is this for?" he breathed, "At least in justice tell me." He had supplied himself with another bouquet, and round the stems rolled a slip of paper with the pencilled note: "My love, my cruel one, meet me once again to-morrow

"My love, my cruel one, meet me once again to-morrow night at seven where we met that one happy night.—Your

Denny."

He offered the flowers to her; her hands never moved. The young man's face flushed palpably; he stepped closer to her and deliberately dropped the flowers into her umbrella.

The girl's face was white and cold as snow; when she saw him standing at the door she felt within herself that he would speak. If Crawford and he came into contact there would be a scene beyond description. Crawford's escape would be ruined—the rope round his neck again. She shuddered with cold fear. She had small comprehension of what Denny said, but his voice, his presence filled her with strange sensation that had once been deeply pleasant—now as Willie's betrothed it was the forbidden; she would none of it. The flowers fell into her umbrella. Something like insolence was in the act; she turned scarlet. Although living up Shankhill she had a woman's innate consciousness of the reverence due from a man to a woman. With burning, haughty eyes she reversed the umbrella and put her foot upon the white gleaming blossoms and walked out under the awning. Crawford was just back and put her into the cab. Deloney had the pleasure of seeing them off.

"The young fury," he muttered. "What can have set

her upon me in this way?"

The cab rattled hastily on. Molly was upset; she waited

with nervous expectancy for Crawford to speak about Deloney. There was no doubt that he saw him, for the young swell had been right under his eyes, but Crawford was dumb. Their parting moments had come; he would not bring this strange man into their good-bye, but though there was no speech the shadow of Deloney had fallen on them both.

The girl drew nearer to her true and tried friend. In her heart of hearts was weakness—an unshapen dread that she might break her promise when he was gone. In his company was strength; to be near him was to catch some of the faithful steadfastness of his character. She shrank before a future

without him.

Crawford felt her trembling.

"What is it, Molly?"

But he thought he knew, it was this parting, this first fearful definite going from each other that was wringing himself like physical pain.

"Don't leave me-don't."

"My dearest," he murmured in a low tone.

"Yes, yours," she cried excitedly, as if an wering another voice. "Yours, take me with you. Let me go to-night; let me go now."

He looked down into her white, agitated face, then bent

his own over it with the true tenderness of a true man.

"That may not be, my dearest."
"Yes—yes—if—if—you love me."
"If! Have you ever doubted it?"

"Then let me go; for God's sake let me go—even as a sister."

It was the crv of a soul fearing a far-off but ever-nearing flood that might sweep her out into an unknown and terrible sea. Had he even dimly guessed her fears she should have gone.

"Hush, Molly, do not make it harder," and his voice was

husky. He put her clinging arms from about him.

"I will send for you," he said firmly, "as soon as ever I can. Be true to me and I will be true to you. Give me

your hand."

She gave it, and no girl ever meant more truly to keep her oath. He was confident in her love and full of pain at their separation; he drew her in against his hot, beating heart. "Good-bye, my dearest, good-bye. Here is a little present,"—putting something into her hand. "God keep

you, my own, my beautiful."

He kissed her softly. Never did she remember him so gentle, so devoted-like as this night. He lifted her out of the cab on to the door step of her father's house, and she, full of blinding tears and wild excitation, saw the cab turn and go.

The horror of loneliness fell. He was gone, she was alone, had no one to depend on; no Willie, no one to bear her up against herself. The pain, the terror, the dark of it.

She leaned against the house-side out in the cold rain, dark, forlorn, broken-hearted, desolate, that winter's night with his little present in her hands. All the valuables he had in the world, his prayer-book, and almost all of that hard-earned, hard-saved money he had meant to spend upon their

little palace home, he left with her.

The press announced that Crawford had escaped. The entire city was convulsed; it was startling to both enemies and friends, a semaphore of guilt and cowardice to the whole country; those who had given their hard-earned pence that meant so much sweat to push the defence had all those inner avenues ajar which being "sold" opens up: but they took it manly and said "Crawford was a brick, how did they like him." The other section of the populace were persuaded and openly avowed that the whole affair was arranged between the Orangemen and the authorities: their final remark that "If Crawford had been a Roman Catholic he would have swung," throws a lurid light on the logic and broadness of the views of a section of the Belfast populace.

The authorities were in high dudgeon. The escape was a reflection on their vigilance: the idea of escaping from the new gaol was preposterous. Great hopes were entertained that the runaway would soon be snared: Heaven and earth were set in motion to catch him, but whether the police were not so nimble as they seemed when the rabble were at their heels, or that Crawford himself was a better type of national agility, is neither here nor there: suffice it that he had the

best of it.

One gentleman was genuinely sorry—the worthy attorney John Rea. He ran his fingers through his hair in profound vexation; to him it was a real disappointment. Only a few years

back he had fought the Crown in the Harbison Fenian case. This trial would have been fighting them on different ground. When his fees were paid he handed the entire sum over to the

news-boys of the city for a jam-tart treat.

While the fuss is going on, Crawford is sailing tranquilly over the broad Atlantic. He had bought his liberty off the warder for one hundred pounds, who would consider it a high price. The idea of flight had been repulsive, but penal servitude for a crime of which he was innocent much more so. He could not believe in the legal quiddity upon which acquittal hung, and feeling certain of condemnation, in rank despair put his fate to the touch. It had been like spending one's last penny on a lottery ticket and drawing the prize. The warder took the bribe; he, too, was aware of the risk, but dared it for the money; he had views toward America, meant to get away as soon as possible.

It rained constantly that night Crawford left Belfast, but the wind fell and the Galvanic made a steady run up the Mersey with her wide docks and floating caravanserai. He went at once on board the big iron-sheeted ark that might have startled the first ship-builder. Before the escape had got properly abroad the great ship started her giant engines, spread herself like a thing alive, and moved mightily into the

deep ocean.

The runaway was safe, yet watched in sad joy the skies of England fade into "waning mist." The assizes passed, the people full of sordid feeling, a few openly satisfied, a few openly disappointed, all itching to get a good box at each other as a sort of vent to the restrained feelings over this affair; but nothing of the kind occurred, the agitation gradually slackened, and the people settled themselves down to work and pay the heavy taxes that the summer's insurrection laid upon their shoulders.

<sup>†</sup> The famous escape from the Belfast Gaol that occurred about this time has no connection with this work.



# PART II.

#### CHAPTER I.

SPRING came blooming, ne'er a frow, on he, beaming brow! Her brilliant garments of bright emerald draped the world, her glorious breath charmed the cold winds into invigorating breezes, the rivers laughed, the birds sang, the trees spread themselves in conscious majesty, the very hearts of men caught of this glorious resurrection and beat gladly once again. The new-come Spring held in her hand a new life for the Bennetts. It had been brought about by Sir Percy Lyle under the influence of Mr. Huntley; this gentleman spoke very kindly for Molly. The young baronet felt only a dim regret about that old affair—his late aunt's mésalliance—the fact of his cousin being a girl, and a very good-looking one, appealed to him, and he fell in with Mr. Huntley's suggestion.

Sir Percy took Mab Morrison, now his affianced wife, into his confidence, and Mab in her goodness offered to assist the girl herself out of her own boundless wealth. This, of course, Sir Percy would not allow, but the offer probably spurred him

to do more than he had intended.

He wished to take Molly completely and altogether out of the society of the Bennetts, but Phil was not to be got round. Nothing would induce him to let the girl leave his house; perhaps he was thinking of Crawford and the promise given so faithfully that night of flight in his little back-room; but besides this, he liked his daughter near him, and his eves lay on her in a love none of his other children could inspire. Sir Percy had to act accordingly; he bought them a house, furnished it completely and allowed the girl an annuity.

The house was an old-fashioned, stone-built cottage with more pretensions to durability than artistic display, but bathed in the sunshine with the roses blooming round the porch, and its big garden in bloom, it was a pretty little house. It was situated a couple of miles out of the city in the Holywood district, the house-front toward the sea, and the

back to the high-road and the Holywood Hills.

From the very threshold ran a big, sinuous garden, where mignonette and musk and roses and wall-flowers and sweet-william grew all through other. Further along the garden path you came on rasp-bushes, gooseberries, currants, here and there an apple tree. Further along was the potato plot, interspersed with cabbage, peas, and beans. At the extreme end was a little gate that opened into the sea-shore path.

What a delicious place that garden was on a bright spring morning or on a summer mid-day with the soft winds rustling amid the bean-stalks and about the musk blossoms, and over

the glowing roses and mignonette.

Molly was another girl; that penetralia where her deep and bitter pangs had been secreted was swept and sweet. The degraded, fearful, hand-to-mouth life had passed away; to live now was delightful. At first her young heart suddenly let loose had been mad-like in its great throb, but that exuberance had filtered down to calm delight. Everything was so different, she could hardly believe it; hopes and longings that had to be thrust aside as impossible could now have free scope. It was not time wasted to read a book; there was no mill to go to, no house cleaning when she came in, none of it, none. The whole sweet day was her own. What a boon; none can really estimate it but those who have had their time crammed with coarse uncongenial work.

When they were settled in their new house Molly went to school and began to study closely. Her reading became the praise of all; the teachers assigned it to a pathetic softness in her voice; it was rather fine intact sympathy with the author. But music was the prevailing faculty, and she gave herself more entirely to it. The piano became at once her grief and joy; day by day she strove and longed; all the

fine delicious throes of a musician tore her bosom.

She was much improved; the freedom from exacting toil, the better food, were showing visibly; her face was losing its excessive pallor and a faint blushing light filling it, but more than this change was the subtle mental one that was lifting the sad expression from her countenance; in her eyes now was a look of softened sweetness.

Mrs. Bennett treated her differently. This new house, the steady monthly money, were like a fairy's unexpected gift; she wisely changed her bitter tone and sneering remarks, strove not to come into collision with her. The woman was really very proud of the new house; the depths into which they had drifted had not quite killed her native vanity. She busied herself with the new furniture, the new duties, and

never since her first marriage days was so happy.

But to Phil the change was fatal. He had a longer distance to and from his work, and it was generally late when he got home. He had really meant to keep sober when he promised his daughter, but now that much more than his sobriety could accomplish had taken place he went back to the whiskey. It is strange the fatal power of drink; it's hold is fierce, stronger even than natural affection. Every phase of life has its something that instils ite grain of poison. Molly troubled over this; it was the spot in her sun, the dark, deep

streak mingling in the glad river of life.

As the days were on the girl grew more at demore toward music: the fire of ambition was kindling in her soul, she worked like a Trojan. Much she thought of her absent lover, longed that he was near to see her, hear her sing and play. But she did not even know where he had gone. There had never been one single line; his promise to write had never been fulfilled. How was it? Why was it? His parting gift touched her as nothing else could. Out of his prayer book she read her own prayers, and every prayer had in its bosom him—the absent one. And his money, those glittering sovereigns that she guarded so royally were more to her than mere coin. They were symbols of his love, his provision, his thoughtfulness, his self-sacrifice. He himself went away branded and empty; he left her well plenished. 'His absence endeared him to her-was as a cloud softening the actual condition of things. She forgot that she had once hesitated to marry him, forgot that another had been more than he had. He was her absent lover working hard in some strange country for her; the romance, the glamour of her own imagination did much to wean her from Deloney.

True, of an evening when she sat adown the garden and watched the moon rising, and her light falling in showers of silver over the old Holywood Hills, his voice, his personage seemed to surround and overmaster her, but she turned loyally

to that trembling sea, to those ships sailing gallantly with lights aglow past the turretted towers of Carrick Castle and through the white lipped water of Garmovle on up the Lough into Belfast Harbour, hoping, dreaming, believing they bore some message love-lorn and true from her absent "Willie." But the ships passed into the docks day by day, month by

month, and still they brought her nothing.

Forgive her if sometimes her trembling woman-heart yearned to those knolly uplands where the moonlight shone and the ghosts of dear-dear moments seemed to flit; the radiant moonlight always recalled that night when alone and unprotected in Carrick Hill she met the young lieutenant. The glory of that night as she flew home up the dear old Shankhill had left its nimbus in her heart and soul, and that night in the theatre had left a memento, a tiny strip of paper that Deloney had rolled around the stems of his flowers had entangled in the ribs of her umbrella. She found it afterwards, she had it still, once in a weak moment she halfraised it to her lips, but recovering herself desisted.

The lovely summer slipped away: she lived adown the garden with the flowers, the sea, and her books, and her young dreams of life's good time ahead. Autumn came, amber, roseate: the apples reddened, the wheat mellowed, the foliage yellowed, the skies filled with deep colours of scarlet and violet, the flowers bloomed in richest puberty, the swallows lingered while the world lav cradled in bronzied dves. But now and again a sigh rushed off the scarlet-lipped waves like a prayer to the sun to stay. Molly lingered at the little gate at the foot of the garden, her eves shaded by her hand from the blood-red sunset; she was still looking out toward the sea, looking at the ships coming into harbour, waiting, still waiting for news.

The autumn fainted away, the world was changed. corn-fields reaped, the fruit gathered the sun paled, the flowers dead, the birds silenced, the skies leaden. Over meadow and hillock a wide, cold prospect-cattle driven home, nothing of life abroad, the very trees were naked, the mountains bald and distinct with no warm mists softening their rugged The air thin and bright showed all things in severest outline. To some this was delightful—the vivid landscape, the rocky hills, the rattling cataracts, the leafless hedge-rows, the bone-like trees, as they mounted their beasties and galloped in glee over gate and gap. But the poor winced at the biting blast, and shivered over their little peat blaze. It was too cold to stand adown the garden and watch the ships making into harbour. Sad fears were touching Molly; she was getting "afeared for Willic" as her step-mother put it. Disease, accident, she knew not what must have kept him from writing, for well she knew he would never break his word. The piano was her great musoler; she played into it her uneasmess, her shaping fears, her intense longing. Just now she was practising hard. A concert for the parish poor in the little town of Holywood was to take place, and the school she attended had been taked to help. Molly was one of the purils chosen. To her this was an affair of very great importance, the first time she had ever appeared in public, and she was trying to do her best. To her young mind it was the beginning of the musical career she was longing after. She had been to one of the rehearsals and was coming home. It was a cold bleak day late in December, full of rain and wind and sleet. The raw wind blew in her teeth, and tossed the good tange about her brow, and nipped her cheeks scarlet. She felt no cold; her heart was warm, stirred to the depths with her teacher's praise and the congratulations of the musical doctor who was to conduct the concert. To her undisappointed and unblunted soul these encomiums were sweet. She walked homeward, unheedful of the wild weather, her mind full of her piece—chords not distinct enough, runs not tripping enough—resolving to perfect all before the great event.

The road was in a mess, mud every inch, the hills drenched and dreary, the sea thunderous. It stretched away on the right a dark, rumbling sheet, with frills of white foam that buried the screaming sea-gulls. Dark charges of smoke flooded the leaden skies as the steamers toiled into port. It was wild out there on the water; the girl, pausing a second in her thought to glance at the bouncing billows and creamy surge, agreed with Byron that the "torn ocean" was grand.

But she went on, her mind still busy with the concert that was making such a stir in the little town of Holywood. Holywood was at this time the fashion, and in the summer was a merry place. Promenades on the Kinegar, Gainsborough hats and silk dresses started up everywhere; along the shore, refreshment stalls, merry-go-rounds, swing-boats spread themselves.

Crowds came down from Belfast to witness the boat races across the lough to the Antrim coast, but in winter there were only the local people, well-to-do merchants, city lawyers, retired officers and a few better class families who had villas out here far from the smoke and din of busy Belfast. It was mostly to this audience Molly would have to play; in here eyes it was select, and she meant to be worthy of the occasion.

A sound of horses' feet broke in upon her and made her look down the wide dirty road; a horseman was galloping forward, behind him a speck in the distance like another rider; the front rider came on rapidly, in a second he was quite close. Molly looked at him; her face coloured furiously. He

was Lieutenant Deloney.

"Miss Bennett," he exclaimed as he swung off his horse instantly.

## CHAPTER II.

FOR a moment she was glad, then an intense longing to escape swept over her; but there was no shelter, no refuge on the open high road—cold, muddy, empty, with its sub-nude hedge-rows and bald hills lying back on one side and the roaring ocean on the other, and there in the close distance the gentleman's groom.

Denny proffered his hand, the girl averted her eyes assayed to pass on, her lips drawn into a vermilion bar. Perhaps she was recalling his almost insult coming out of the theatre. She moved a pace, but he laid his fingers on her arm; the touch

tingled her to the core.

"I will not suffer this," he said, in a quiet voice. "You must speak. I must speak."

"I will not. Let me pass."

But she was trembling; the sweet something she thought dead rose up afresh, exquisite, terrible in overwhelming power; she dare not look into his face.

He stood directly in her path, the ribbons over his arm, his

charger close to the foot-way.

"Allow me to pass."
"Presently, Miss Bennett."

His attendant rode up, he tossed him the reins, and motioned him forward. They stood silent a second, he eating her face with his hungry love-lorn eyes, she gazing past him down the empty road. What had come over her? What had set her against him? She who had smiled in his face, had blushed under his embrace that Sunday evening up Antrim Road. This girl who had been a sweet response to himself, a beautiful open page under his eyes.

"You are angry about the flowers," he murmured; "but surely the end justified the means? You will not be bitter

with me over that?"

He had not yielded, even after that repulse at the theatre; his apologies and entreaties had made their way into her

humble dwelling to be returned unanswered, then finally one came back "not found," and despatching a courier he discovered the bird was flown. He had tried to find her, but in vain; once he almost brought himself to ask Sir Percy Lyle, then in a shallow way drew back. But he longed intensely to see her; each disappointment fed his desire. He was one of those contrary fellows who do not care a fig for anything but what they can't get. He had not the wisdom of the fox to cry sour grapes; he considered the unattainable sweet. The idea of being baffled by a girl was distasteful to him, especially this one he was so fond of, and whom he was persuaded was just as fond of him.

Molly strove to keep herself cool; one thing stood out clearly before her mind, the promise Crawford had insisted on, the promise which to him was more than their engagement.

He was not a gentleman; yet his person, his manner, the love looking out of every feature was a direct contradiction to it; but she must believe Crawford, she must.

"Sir," she said coldy, "I cannot speak with you."

"Madalina," the young man said, gently, "What is it?

What has turned you against me?"

The heart of the girl leapt frantically; how could she hear that voice and believe anything evil of him. She longed to ask him what it meant, that strange undefined charge—not a gentleman—such a one as the Shankhill boys would scorn and spit upon. The words haunted her; she could not forget them.

"Has some person been telling you tales?" he resumed, quietly, vexed that the young unsophisticated maiden had been tampered with. He thought of Sir Percy, of Mr. Huntley, even of Mab Morrison as he stumbled after the truth; but

he passed on.

"Madalina, I have no idea what it is, nor does it matter. I do not pretend to be a saint, but it is in your power to make me a better man. My dearest, will you? You are not like any other woman I have met, you are sincere. When I am with you I wish to be different; your personal influence bears me back to my early boyish ideals of goodness, chivalry and love. I had long ago a belief that when God made a woman beautiful He made her all beautiful; that the face but mirrored the beauty of the soul; life and trouble, and sin mar perhaps the harmony, but at first both are beautiful. Nothing has touched you; to me you are

the embodiment of my first grand dream of Woman, Pure within, Beautiful without. Come to me, come, you will lift me up, Madalina. I have gone under, drifted far, far from all I meant to be. You know nothing of society, of what it tolerates, of what it expects, of the thin partition between acknowledged right and condemned wrong, of the slippery edge on which a young man walks. Be my wife, my dearest, and make me good."

The young soldier paused, flushed slightly. He had spoken very quietly, yet he was deeply stirred. The best in him had touched him; he let it lead him, and in his immost soul he longed to walk nobly beside this beautiful, pure young girl. He stood watching the flush fade on her face; he truly loved her, his very hands trembled, tears were in his eyes. He leaned

forward and down to her, his very heart in his looks.

"You love me, Madalina, my sweetest."

The red streak was dead out of her lips, the glare out of her eyes, her pulse went slowly like a clock ceasing to tick. It was a trying moment, few women could have stood it. Yes, she loved him, beyond life or death or Housen, but she was not her own; she was Crawford's. He was far away, living and waiting for her. The girl turned in sickening agony from Denny's dark rich glance; away out she looked to that terrible ocean, it seemed a picture of her own leaping, raging soul. There was no meeting of Heaven and sea in a blending line of glory. Nothing but rupture and fury.

Marry him! be his wife, be with him always, bear his name, elevated to his rank, his—his for ever. Surely if there was Heaven on earth, here it was. She was frail to bear against it, but honour and faith were strong in her, and for the sake

of him who was far away she resisted.

Denny misunderstood her silence and her trembling lips; he put his arm around her fondly and drew her to him, his head bent lower and lower till his lips touched hers. They stood thus for one long fleeting moment, she not repulsing, half-returning his loving caress; he felt her lips clinging to his own, and the love in him beat firm and true. But she drew from him, her features blanching as the lines of foam on the moaning ocean. She must do her duty; duty was true love.

"It cannot be," she said simply.

The blood rushed to his face. He was cut to the quick; this from those lips he had felt so a moment since. What

meant it? These were his first proposals to any woman, and carried from that alone an emotion peculiarly their own. He had opened his very heart to her; he loved her with his best instincts, yet she was refusing, and it stung him to the quick.

"Madalina," he said gently, "Madalina, I have seen your heart. When it is mine there must be no obstacle, see none,

make none, for both our sakes."

Their eves met; her throat was parched, her resolution and strength quivering; she must away lest she gives in, lest she forgets the absent one. Yet she suffered for a moment her agony-filled eyes to meet his dark love-lorn gaze. It touched her and revealed more than his words, the passion in his breast. She dare not answer his remark.

"Good-bye," she breathed; "good-bye."

"Madalina, who gave you that ruby heart? Is that between us. Give it back, it is not yet too late, and be my wife. did not mean to ask you again. You see I have; be true to your own self; be true to both of us. Is it yes?"
"No," she cried franctically, "no."

There was a pause, deep and dark. Denny had no more to say, but in his soul he vowed he would have her, cost what it would. Openly with all honour he had asked her, and his evil self, whom hitherto he had almost always followed, and whom it was easy to follow, whispered and grinned in his face mockingly and maliciously.

"Let me go," she said, desperately.

"No, it is growing dusk; I will not leave you alone on this desolate road. Wherever you are going I will see you safely there."

She glanced at him; he had never used this tone to her before. She felt and saw it would be useless to thwart him: she had had her way, he was having his now, but she could not let it pass.

"You are too kind."

"I know I am," he smiled.

And her eyes fell; beaten and small she felt as they walked side by side, he chatting easily as if forgetful of what had occurred, and helping her gallantly over the nasty places on the footway.

Presently they approached her home; she hated to have him discover her seclusion, but it was inevitable. As they neared it little Jennie came bouncing through the gate; she had been watching for Molly this last half-hour.

"Molly, Molly," cried the child; "tea is waiting, and I am

hungry.'

"How are you, my pretty one," said Denny, holding out his hand affably.
"Sir Pershay," cried the child, brightly.

"No, my little one, I am not Sir Percy Lyle."

Molly coloured. His quiet familiarity with the name did not escape her; evidently he knew her cousin, and most probably their relationship. She bade Jennie go indoors, but Jennie stood her ground. Denny was amused and looked quizzically into Molly's blushing face.

"Good-bye, Mr. Deloney," she breathed without holding

out her hand.

"Good-bye, Miss Bennett. I am like the little one, hungry. "I suppose you would not share your tea," but, glancing at his clothes and muddy boots, "I am not presentable."
"No," she muttered feebly, without lifting her eyes.

She was conscious he shook hands with the child, lifted off his hat, and was gone. He had slipped hait-a-sovereign into the child's hand, and she ran off to show the treasure to her mother.

Molly leaned on the little gate and watched him out of sight; then her arms stretched out into the falling dusk as if to magnetise him back. She had held out to the very last; the fierce swift realisation swept over her dark and deep; she wished she had failed.

"I have done it," she moaned, "I have done it." Yes, she

had

#### CHAPTER III.

MRS. BENNETT called Molly aside the next day. She had watched the little parting at the gate from the kitchen window which looked into the high-road. She knew Molly had another admirer; the notes and flowers that came to their little home up Shankhill had revealed it, but who he was or what she could not find out. Molly would never tell; but she had been obliged to buy the woman's silence out of her scanty earnings; well she knew if her father heard he would not be put off, that he would sift her little secret to the very bottom.

Since their removal from Shankhill the affair had dropped.

Mrs. Bennett held up the half-sovereign.

"He gave it to Jennie."

Molly coloured. "We must return it," she said hastily."

"How could you let her take money from a stranger?"

"What harm? He is a sweetheart!"

Molly frowned. "I will return it," she said decidedly, "but

Jennie can have another one in its place."

Mrs. Bennett was not particular what was done with this identical half-sovereign. Molly took it almost rudely from her open palm.

"Is he the one?" asked the woman signficantly.

Molly bowed.

"He's a fine-looking man. What's his name?"

"Never mind," returned Molly crossly, "and do not tell

my father."

Mrs. Bennett was secretly displeased. Like most women, to her a love affair was enticing, and she would have liked a good hour's confidential chat over the affair, but Molly was as silent and as "dour" as ever. The girl was very much perturbed, and found it almost impossible to go through her little life. She knew now, she had always known, although trying to get away from it, that her soldier-lover was all

in all. Love would never more be hushed by that deceitful lullaby, "My absent future husband." Denny was hers, the only love of her soul. After this, one thing disappointed her keenly, for she had fully expected it; he never wrote. She was spared the trouble of returning those delightfully-perfumed billet-doux. Of course, this was only as it should be, but the disappointment was none the less keen, and in the silence that followed everything seemed over. She had intended enclosing that half-sovereign in his very first note, but there came no note, and she, fearing to be the first to open up a correspondence, laid it in her little purse, a treasured possession.

Crawford had not written; there carrie no message to break the weary waiting. The half-fear that he was dead haunted her throughout the dreary winter. One afternoon late in January she sat thinking in this gloomy strain; the oppression upon her was intense as if some found were about to burst, something calamitous happen. She was too restless to play, too restless to sit still: she could only stare out of the window to the bleak wintry world with its gathering shadows. A carriage stopped at the gate, a foot came crunching up the path; she sat erect, a ray of colour swept her wan cheek.

Perhaps Sir Percy, perhaps ----?

Her pulses throbbed, some exciting hope, intense to pain, coursed through and through her. She heard Mrs. Bennett open the door, and the next moment Mr. Huntley walked in. He shook hands warmly. He was glad to see the girl, glad to meet her in these better surroundings, glad to see her young beauty developing into magnificent perfection.

He had something in his pocket-book for her; it had come under cover to himself that morning, and he very kindly

came to deliver it himself.

He put the letter immediately into her hand, doubtless thinking her patience had had a severe test.

"Thank you," said Molly softly, "it was so kind of you

to come."

"Not at all, it was a pleasure. Now go and read it."

"You won't mind," she said coyly. "May I ask you to

tea? We have tea at five o'clock."

He declined, but the girl pressed him and he stayed. Molly left the room to devour the long-looked-for epistle. She was quivering in every nerve; faith had come, despairing hope had

turned to joyous hope. She was glad now that terrible temptation had not swept her with it, that she had stood firm to that hard promise, that that true heart so far away was not betrayed, and yet—and yet the beautiful forbidden, was the beautiful forbidden still.

She broke the seal with trembling joyous fingers. "Prince George Hotel,

"Cape Town, "Sunday, 18—

"Dear Molly,-

"You are wishing to hear from me, but I had to be cautious, and there was nothing of consequence to tell you. I hope, dear Molly, you are in good health and spirits and not fretting, because I am away. When I got here I knocked about a while doing odd jobs at my own trade. Now I am up country and have started sheep farming. This is a great country, but some disease among the cattle has broken out. So far my sheep have escaped and I am doing well; there is a chance of rising quickly out here that could never be at home. I would like to get on while I am young, to taste prosperity before grey hairs and wrinkles water it down.

"Dear Molly, I'm glad to be out here on this account. It has just one drawback, a great one; I leave you to guess it. Send me your photograph taken in the white dress with the blue sash. I have a fancy for seeing you as you used to be when we walked together up dear old Shankhill and up the Ballygomartin Road. I think all the time about the old road and you and the "Island" and the fellows and good old Belfast. This place is very different from home. Write me a long letter and don't fret. Remember I am working hard, and will send for you. Keep a good heart, my girl. My true love to you. Remember me to your father and mother and children. God bless you dear.

"Your true lover,

"WM. CRAWFORD.

"Write soon."

Molly stared in a sort of unbelieving disappointment. This was what she had longed and hoped and waited and agonized for—this. A stung cry broke from her lips. Her young, romantic, imaginative mind had painted a gushing, extravagant epistle full of poesy, and high coloured hopes and delicious dreams and eternal pledges that to some souls are

food. Crawford could not do it. At any time he would rather do a day's work as write a letter, and labouring under his own deep feelings, this letter had been a tough job for him. But Molly was hurt. This letter lacked what had been so visible in Denny's, and she was in the mood to miss it Disappointment and grief blinded her to the undercurrent, the pathos between the lines, beautiful and true.

That was a memorable evening spent with Mr. Huntley, playing to him, singing to him, talking to him while all the time her heart was breaking. He went away happy, glad at having, as he thought, brought gladness to this young girl, inwardly telling himself he would pay a special singing-master to train her voice; but he went away, their good-nights were good-byes. Never again were they to meet on this side of time. The future was only for one of them; the other was to slip away.

When Mr. Huntley was gone, but came the letter again. She read it slowly and carefully, but again she missed the same something. Ah! perhaps 'twas not the letter; perhaps, if Lieutenant Deloney had sent it everything would have been different. Be it as it may, her face fell, and a wordless moan broke from her dry lips,—that wordless prayer for love which many women pray, that hunger cry that many women

cry within their secret souls.

After a while she went to the piano and played until the fire had died out, and her fingers were stiff and numb; it was a relief to get plunging into bars and chords, pouring into tones and semi-tones the unspeakable. It grew late; her father was not home, and recollecting, Molly shut the piano and went into the kitchen to remark about it.

"What can be keeping father?" she said.

"Whiskey," snapped Mrs. Bennett, who was angry at being kept out of bed.

"But he was never so late before."

She went over to the window and drew up the blind. The

rain was falling in torrents and the wind raging.

It was such a night as Burns has pictured Tam O'Shanter caught in. Molly became nervous and uneasy, but presently there was a "fussel" at the gate. Molly opened the door; her father staggered up the path, and indoors, drunk exceedingly. He tripped on the hall mat and down he went. He was too drunk to rise, and the women were not strong

enough to get him to his feet. In a few minutes he fell asleep in his wet clothes, and the two women sat shivering beside him. He awoke in a couple of hours and was got to bed; but in the morning he was ill, and as the day advanced he grew worse, and it was necessary to have a doctor. The medical man was grave. There was lung trouble, and the stomach was burned, while the man's temperature was fever high. The case was serious, in fact critical from the beginning.

The little household was plunged into alarm, the piano closed, the concert abandoned, the life of the others converged

round the sick room.

Molly suggested a servant, but Mrs. Bennett tabooed it at once. "She niver could stand them hussies." So the nursing and care of the house devolved upon themselves.

Phil continued the first week neither better nor worse. Dread like a tantalizing fiend flew about from day to day, but the doctor had ave a cheery word for the voung girl waiting in the hall with questioning anxiety. Had Phil been a king among fathers his daughter could not have been more distressed. She forgot he ever had a fault; he was her father. her nearest blood relation on earth, so fond of her, so fond of her beloved dead, she dare not contemplate life without him. As the days went by Phil rallied; the immediate danger was past. The convalescence might develop into a feeble resuscitation or might drop into a lingering decline. Phil would never be his own man again; he was now a great baby that had to be nursed and cared and soothed. It is strange; life brings us back to our first weakliness before we slip away. The man's past seemed like a dream; he liked to close his eyes and re-dream it-re-dream that beautiful time. Oh! if Madalina had lived, how proud she would have been of their child-this beautiful girl, so good, so tender, so kind; he thought of her as an angel, one of the few God lets loose among men to teach them, Goodness is not a moral but a reality, living and abiding.

Molly sat by him humouring him, stroking his withered, attenuated hand, reading betimes, singing betimes, helping him with her nearness to bear the long weak hours. She was full of thankfulness that he had "overed," as her step-

mother said, this terrible illness.

Crawford's letter had been answered, but the photograph

had not yet been sent. Her father's illness had put the affair back, but now that he was better Phil himself kept harping to go to town and get "taken." He insisted that she should put on that wonderful dress got expressly for the concert that she had intended to play at, instead of the old white muslin. This dress was a wonderful affair in the little cottage—soft, creamy cashmere, with swansdown trimming. Molly had never had such a dress; her white shoulders and beautiful throat rose out of it like moulded ivory. As the girl dressed herself she saw that she was at her best, that she had never looked so well in her whole life as in this beautiful evening dress. She ran downstairs to show herself. Her father eved her with the punctilious eyes of the sick, then carefully, with some of his old readiness, he helped on her great ulster coat, and folded neatly round her throat and chest a woollen cloud. When the little parcel her shoes and gloves made was tied, he came with her to the door and kissed her fondly. To her dying day she remembered those little attentions, that loving caress of her old father, that convoy to the door, the admiring pride in his pale wern face.

Molly brought the little sister with her to take her off the mother's hands, who would have a full day minding the invalid and the other child. Together they set off blithe and lighthearted, two joyous young ones, whose hearts beat high.

It was a fine frosty day with plenty of pale, bright sun; the keen, clear air was bracing and the landscape distinct in the vivid light. The country looked well, the naked trees rimed with frost, the grass blades powdered finely and the Holywood Hills white with snow. The sea leaped full of light, the white gulls screaming over its glistening bosom; the dark coppices of Redburn, the gables and bays of Ormston, freckled with dainty frost, sported a gloria they had not in the summer. At the city boundary Molly and the little sister took tram; it ran them into the city heart. Here the crowds thronged, the bosiness and fuss, tear and terror of a big city were in full swing. Amid this stream of life's work and wear, here and there knots of young people broke in—laughing, sparkling, rattling as they passed on.

Molly's heart warmed. She had grown up among the rowd the big Belfast crowd, and as the girl looked at it and passed into it, she felt as if it were home. The quiet life in the little cottage was new and raw; here, with the drifts

of people, the noise, the rush, the street brilliance was native element. She wished the little cottage sitting in the middle of the stir.

It was a fine day for photography, and the lord of the camera went into ecstasy over his subject. Molly was "taken" in all conceivable positions. The artist had an eye to business and saw grist to his mill in the splendid picture this girl would make. So many sittings necessitated delay, and the short, bright wintry day was getting grey when the

photographer's prey escaped from the gallery.

They made their way to the tram junction. Here the traffic is excessive, and as they waited a car, a carriage came along slowly. Lieutenant Deloney was inside; he saw Molly at once and she saw him. For one moment their eyes met. Then that everlasting tremor caught her; she could not stand her ground, but taking the child's hand, moved round the goldsmith's palace of chalices and gods and golden shrines glittering in the gaslight.

The girl knew within her heart he would speak. Her hold tightened on the little purse. His half-sovereign was in

it, and she meant to give it him if he spoke.

Denny was out of the carriage instantly. He was in evening dress, and advanced smiling. He spoke to little Jennie first although his eyes were on Molly, whose beautiful face, rising out of grev scarfs like a young moon in May mist, put its old impelling spell upon him. She fumbled with the flap of the purse. At last it was opened; she drew out the unfortu-

nate half-sovereign.

"This is yours." she said, holding it toward him nervously. Denny stroked his moustache devotedly—he had a weakness for it sometimes—and elevated his evebrows slightly. He had been drinking hard since that day on the Holywood Road. That affair had really hurt him—there was a sting in it he had not got over. He who could choose from the first families in the whole county had been refused, actually refused by this young Shankhill girl; it was gall, it was vinegar—but—

His lips closed firmly, his eves fastened on her. Her pale cheeks gathered flame under his quiet stare; if she fancied to

thwart him it was a mistake.

"Yes," he murmured after a pause. "Here," he added a little loudly, putting his finger up to a street arab rushing

past with an armful of "Teles" fresh from the printers' press. The lad stopped breathless and drew with his cold fingers one of the papers from his bundle. Denny smiled.

"This lady," he said politely, "wishes to assist you, my

boy. Miss Bennett."

Her scarlet face paled; the hot angry eyes went defiantly to his, but he smiled calmly on the storm flashing out upon him; her hot glance, baffled and more angry, dropped unto the white flagstones. The shivering news-boy looked stupidly from the "toff tay tha' layday."

"The arab. Miss Bennett, pardon me reminding you."

Her hand fell; there was nothing for it but not the soin into the astonished news-boy's hand. The lad pulled his front lock in silent astonished gratitude; his great starved eyes rested for a moment with a child's reverence in them on the agitated, beautiful face of Molly; then he darted among the crowd a temple of living joy.

Molly almost choked with anger; she turned away haughtily without a word. Deloney put his hand on little Jennie's arm and stayed her; the girl in her agitation did not notice until a few steps forward, looking round quickly, the child was not

to be seen.

"Where is the little one?" she cried in alarm, retracing her steps.

Denny had lifted her into the carriage.

"I'm a-going for sweets, Molly. Come too."

"How dare you?" she blazed upon the young man. "Bring the child out."

"No," he returned coolly. "I am taking her for sweets."
"You are not," she said vehemently. "Iennie, come out."

The young soldier looked at her. In his mind he was comparing this temper with the sweet compliance, the tender rapture on her countenance last summer when they paused at this very place to go a-driving. Was she hiding her true heart behind this nonsense? He was afraid so.

She bent into the carriage. "Jennie, come out; you cannot

go with this gentleman." Deloney stepped close to her.

"Madalina," he said in a low tone, "you have had your way, to-night I must have mine. Am I to be the butt of your ill-temper because I love you?"

"Hand the child out," she cried, "You must have for-

gotten yourself."

"Not I, you have; forgotten, too, the unspoken pledge you gave me last summer when you — ''
"Hush,'' she cried, "hush,'' excited now beyond descrip-

tion.

"Why should I? I am not ashame I of it. Let me drive the child home. What objection can you have?"

"I won't allow you."

"Then," returned Denny, "I will not ask your leave."

Her heart fell; she had made a brave fight, but it was no use. He was bent to have his way; she could not beat

him off.

"Why should we wrangle? Why not be happy?" He was almost angry. Rob, their old coachman was upon the box and would no doubt deliberate mentally, if not orally, on this prolonged discourse on the footpath.

"Let me help you into the carriage Madalina." "Where do you wish me to go?" she asked.

"Oh, for some tea and these sweets for the baby. Allow me," he added more loudly, as he assisted her into the carriage.

"I strove against the stream and all in vain. Let the great river take me to the main."

## CHAPTER IV.

HE drove them to Thompson's, the Café de Luxe of Belfast. They used one of the small saloons on the first floor, and Denny secured the use of it to themselves. Molly could not eat, although cold and hungry; neither could Denny; but Jennie did ample justice to everything, to the young gentleman's amusement and Molly's alarm. Presently the little gourmand showed signs of sleep, and Molly took her carefully upon her knee. The true womanliness of the girl showed itself in the handling of the child. She seemed to have forgotten her companion in her engrossment with the child. Her beautiful face, like an image of gentle devotion, hung over the sleeping child; its expression softened as sweetened as she sat thus in her white, clinging dress. Denny thought of a picture he had seen in a dim old gallery far away from Ireland. He saw, or fancied he saw, resemblance to Raphael's Madonna. It was something of a refresher to meet a young lady who did not find the little sister a nuisance. Presently they began to talk in low, hushed tones. Denny asked was she going to the Tietiens concert. The Tietiens concert! Ah! it was coming off this very night. No, she was not going. When it was first advertised she had meant to be there, but her father's illness had intervened, and she must be content to miss it; he was unable to take her.

"Come with me," said Denny, "I have seats engaged." It was a great temptation to a young music-hungry soul. Her eyes fell; his handsome face, tinged with admiration, made sad havoc of the girl's meant-to-be's, meant-to-do's. To hear the prima donna was the chance of a life-time; it was notorious in those days that the really good singers stood shy of Relfast. To hear Tietiens would be a rare treat, and then to sit with him to taste once more—the old delight, to ——

"Come, my sweetest heart," urged the young soldier, "let us have another evening together."

"The child," she breathed; "I must go home with her." "Not at all," returned Denny; "there is no time. I can send her home in the carriage."

The girl's heart thumped. "It does not look kind, father

might be displeased."

It was against her mind, but the gentleman talked her over. Little Jennie was settled comfortably among the rugs and cushions; the carriage lamps were turned up to their fullest, and a bag of sugar plums placed beside her to quiet her if she awoke: but Jennie was still dreaming when her mother lifted

her from the carriage.

There was still a little while before the concert hour, so they waited in the salon of the cafe. A tiny gilt clock ticked drowsily on the mantel, the fire blazed in rude fits that danced about. The swing gasalier poured its rays on the beautiful golden hair of the voung girl. Denny was somewhat surprised to find her in evening dress. It was not, however, a point to remark upon, but he saw anew the marvellous purity of her complexion that could approach fearlessly the vivid white of the dress. He made her cosy, drew the sofett rearer the fire, settled the cloud carefully round her shoulders, hunted out a fire-screen, then sat down on a low seat rear to her.

Molly began to realise that she was alone with him, after all that had come and gone. While the child was with them the consciousness had not been acute, but now it became tense. Denny was looking at her with his very heart in his eyes, then his gaze wandered to her hand. Ah! there was the ruby heart,

brilliant and beautiful as ever.

Molly's gaze followed his. The ring, Willie's ring—Willie's she herself was his. Denny lifted her hand and played with it, the fire flickering on his silken Memphian head as an Oriental sunset might on the ebony corona of a pagoda. A nervous shiver passed over the girl; tears were rising in her eyes. Denny looked up quickly; he rose instantly.

"What is it, my darling? Hush, my dearest."

He leaned over her, she turned away and hid her face; but he was not to be repulsed, and held her gently in his arms until the vehemence was past.

"Let me go home," she said. "Let me go home, Mr.

Delonev."

"Not mister-Denny-my name is Denis-Denny, my

friends call me.—Dearest, you must call me so." She looked clear into his eyes.

"I never can. I am engaged."

"Ah!"

Here was the reason of his refusal, the reason of his mortification that day on the Holywood Road. His mind flew to her cousin, who had doubtless taken her from Shankhill. No doubt Sir Percy was attentive to Mab, but no man would marry Mab Morrison if he might have this girl. As he watched her, trembling, he divined the struggle in her heart. In her affection he had no rival. Poor little woman, he thought; I know it.

"Who is the happy man?" he asked aloud.

"That is my secret," she returned.
"And mine?" he murmured.

"I," she answered, "am not aware you have one."

He caught her hand; she was dear to him as no one had ever been, but she had wrecked the best and highest impulse he had ever felt. In his inner excitement he fancied she had stamped it in the gutter with her feet. She would never do so again; engaged or not engaged, she would be his.

"Madalina," he said, gently; "that is untrue, you love me;

that is my secret."

"I never told you so."

"No? Do you forget that evening in the twilight far up the Antrim Road, when your lips held mine? A man does not always forget. I have longed for that again, as men long for few things; it is burning the very heart out of me, yea, the

very life."

She was trembling afresh; her idea was that this engagement would alter his bearing towards her, that he would accept the inevitable, and leave her to her fate. Denny had no such intention; this passion was fresh and full and fearful on him; he had never met the like; his little flirtations and triflings with women had been child's play. Here he was a man, with a man's strength and fury and fierceness whipping him on. He wanted to go on, and he was resolved to go on at any cost. The little clock struck; they both looked up. It was time they were readying for the concert.

"We have just time," said Denny; "the Tietiens item is the feature of the evening; we shall leave immediately it is over. That is," he added, politely, "unless you wish to remain."

"Take me home now," she said, feebly.

"Madalina, surely you are not going to spoil our evening." He lifted her face between his hands. They were standing under the chandelier, and the light blazed full into the girl's lovely, tear-wet eyes. She closed them momentarily, and he bent his lips upon them; she struggled, but he held her firmly.

"Remember, I'm another's!" she cried.

"I remember nothing," he breathed softly; "only that I love you. You believe me, my darling?"

Alas she did, with that voice in her ear, with those dear lips

on hers.

They went over in a cab to the Ulster Hall. It was crowded from floor to ceiling; the very corridors were blocked, and in the area there was not standing room. The balcony was "reserved," but here, too, there was a crush. In those far back days concerts were not frequent in Linenpolis, and this one, having such a brilliant artiste, had brought a big house. The county families of Ulster, aristocrats from Dublin, the merchant princes of the city, the musical world, the literary world, the social lights, the fashion and elite of this great and prosperous city were foregathered in one brilliant mass.

Denny led his young lady forward. His seats had been engaged weeks ago; he flushed hotly when he found they were occupied. Nothing puts a soldier out like his orders being infringed; the precision and obedience of the Army spoil him. It had been out of the question to keep seats to-night. The whole city seemed to sweep down on the scared Cerberus in

charge, who bravely took heels.

A gentleman rose and accommodated Molly; Denny had to be content leaning on the back of her chair. Molly's dress was very simple, startlingly simple, among the rustling silks and brilliant brocades and glittering diamonds. She had not even a flower; nothing to set her off but her own beauty. Denny saw her among the very cream of Belfast. He did not miss diamonds or flowers; her shining hair was beautiful, her pure complexion rare and dazzling. In all that well-dressed, done-up, glittering throng there was no one to compare with his young magnificent Madalina. He gazed about in complacent vanity, knowing that he had the most lovely woman in that

great gathering with him. He made it a point to devote himself to Molly, to put her at her ease. His low gay small talk soon did so, and the girl looked about shyly under the covert

of the lowered gases.

A dim succinctness pervaded the house; the gas stars swinging in mid-air made but a shadow of light that played upon the shining heads and gleaming bosoms of the women, and showed in faintest crimson the Red Hand of the O'Neil running round the ornamental work of the balcony. The air was heavy with perfumes and the breath of flowers, and ladened with soft flashings of eyes and low cultured rhythm of voices.

The lights were turned up. Ladies put their fans to their eyes. There was a quick pause, an abrupt break-off in the soft floating conversation, as the flashing, pouring gases flooded the radiant balcony and the crowded area below. A pianoforce fantasia began that evening, which after so long a time is still remembered happily. Then the prima donna bowed to her Irish audience, her long pink satin dress, with its overfall of lace, blending like a cloud of colour between the footlights

and overhanging stars of golden gas.

A hush fell over the house. Those ranges of humanity waited breathless for the tone of a woman's voice. Who can tell what magnificent outbursting music is? What mystic celestial echo rings through every vibrating chord? Is it something of the spirit world? Something nearer the spiritual than anything else we have in this world? It comes, it goes, we cannot stay it; seldom can the songstress repeat it with the same ecstasy, the same timbre; nor the listener hear with the same eager, hungry delight as in these great uplifting moments when Heaven sweeps about us in glorious, evanescent music. How that great singer sang-now high, now breathlessly low—but ever fervent, ever warm; glowing as it were with some of the great Irish warmth in the heart of her hearers. The great hall, with its gaping roof, which is such a terror to singers, flushed and filled with music as it had never until then been filled. The theme was the scena from "Oberon," and as the passionate climax leapt from her quivering lips a startled silent elevation raised that hushed audience to the gate of heaven. It was such singing as we dream they have forever there.

A flood of terrific applause vented those deep emotions, handkerchiefs were waved, flowers tell upon the platform,

arms were waved, voices cried in wild joyous excitement. Molly was quivering. This was really the first singing she had ever heard; it was as if all the little ditties, the unborn unsung melodies in her young soul had been gathered up and launched into one grand overpowering delightful gush of harmony. It was a revelation, glorious, startling, unnerving. The girl felt unfit to listen to more.

"Denny," she breathed, unconsciously using his name, "Let

us go away."

"Certainly, my dear."

He held out his arm, and threaded a way through the gay, brilliant throng. Numerous opera glasses were pointed on them. Deloney bowed in all directions. There was Mab Morrison couped up among a crowd of gentlemen. He made a hasty inspection for Sir Percy, and was pleased that he was conspicuous by his absence. Denny made his best bow, and moved past "dead slow," so that his young companion might be fully exhibited. He was vain of her delightful youth and dazzling beauty. It did him good to show her off before this houseful of his friends and acquaintances.

Molly was heated; she was half oblivious of the gallant gentlemen and beautiful women on either side. The rush of music was still in her ears, the glamour of it on her yet. She looked a radiant beauty, half-proud, half-shy as she passed

through the midst.

The balcony criticised them in eulogistic terms—he so polished and darkly handsome, she so fair and beautiful. The query flew from lip to lip: Who is she? No one seemed to know. They went away together in a cab. Need we linger over the final temptation, the final fight? The girl was only human. She loved him, she believed him, she was worn out with the battle against herself, against him, against everything, and he loved her. At the moment he cared for nothing, about nothing but this girl who was twined as it were about every tendril and fibre of his whole being.

## CHAPTER V.

THE next day late in the afternoon Denny looked into the Liberal Club. Sir Percy Lyle met him in the hall The latter was white to the brows; he drew his lips in close as Deloney came forward.

"Hallo," said Denny, brightly.

The young baronet nodded coldly. "I wish to speak to you."

"With all my heart," returned Denny; "but first let us have

a drink.'

"No," returned Sir Percy, "not first."

Denny bit his lip; he knew he was in for it and nerved himself to brave the interview.

"Come to my room."

They went up the staircase together. Six Percy closed and locked the door carefully. He was holding himself down as best he could, but his white face and the dark rope of vein across his brow betrayed the disturbance within. He hit out at once.

"Where is Madalina Bennett?"
Denny stepped back as if shocked.

"Madalina Bennett!"

Sir Percy ground his teeth. He knew his man, and yet he knew him not.

"Deloney, where have you her? Where did you take her

after the concert?"

"I took her to a cab. She refused my company home."

Sir Percy could not keep cool.

"No white-livered lies can gull me. I know you too well to swallow that. If you have done—this—you must marry her, or else, I tell you straight, I'll drag you through every court in the country."

He was in the highest pitch of excitement. The old wild blood of his race was up. Calm denial could not assuage it. The news was but fresh in his ears, and a few words his

betrothed had used to him in a friend's house last night had returned to his mind, startling and wild. Mab had told him Denny had his cousin at the Tietiens concert. Then in her playful way that did not hide the earnestness beneath, begged him to shield the girl from Denny. "She is so young," she murmured. "He might break her heart."

Sir Percy did not think much of it, but when this wild tale was unfolded to him the words were like a revelation. Had

it come too late?

Denny fingered his moustache; he was as coo! as possible He looked upon Sir Percy as the enraged lover rather than the

insulted or the angry relative.

"Sir Percy," he said, in quiet even tones, "I see you are excited, but it is scarcely fair to saddle me with this unknown calamity to your cousin. I had the fortune, or rather misfortune, to take her to this cursed concert. Should I on that account be the scapegoat for what took place afterwards? By the way, you have not told me what is wrong."

"It is I who need to ask you that. Little I thought when your absence was remarked upon at Fairbanks that vou were

striking me in the dark."

"Hang Fairbanks," shrugged Denny. "I was at"—he hesitated—"well, I don't mind telling you—at ——'

He named an unnameable place, and the purple blood in the young baronet's face burned. He would have given much to resent that reference, but what a man sows he must reap.

He turned away with an angry gesture. "We have long been pals; on that account you might have passed this girl."

"What has happened to the girl?"

"She has not returned home since last night, and the blame has fallen upon you."

"Of course," said Denny, cynically.

"Suppose you did leave her in a cab, was that gallant toward a young woman you had had at a concert?"

"It was her own request."

"Denny, it is useless I do not believe you. I have no more to say, but do not expect me to forget. I will take a greater vengeance than if you had been a rank stranger.

Then Sir Percy unlocked the door, and turning, flung himself into a seat to scrawl off a telegraphic message to Sea View Cottage. He was very much upset. He felt like falling on the young lieutenant and beating the hound out of him. So many of his set knew that this girl was his cousin, and the old scandal of his aunt's marriage would awake; only now it would be tinged darker and stronger. His first conviction was not shaken. Denny, and no one else, was at the bottom of this affair. He was resolved not to let him slip. Had this thing come through a stranger he fancied he would not have been half so incensed. He remembered, too, the upright, honourable man Huntley told him of, and shivered. The whole

thing rose like nausea on his stomach.

He drew the paper to him, and wrote the result of this interview to Phil. Poor Phil: last night when the carriage had brought home little Jennie he had been dozing in his easy-chair pleasantly. He was vexed Molly did not come home with her, but thought Sir Percy had taken her to some place, rever dreaming for a second this was not the Lyle carriage; for his wife, who always got flurried at the sight of a carriage, had allowed the coachman to go without a remark. As the night advanced Phil's uneasiness grew apace, until before the late grey morning broke he was in wild alarm. This wife unfolded the secret of the girl's other lover as they sat killing the long slow hours of the night. However, one hope was yet his. He went out with it in his heart; he came home without it.

The morning was bleak and cold with nipping wind and heavy gusts of rain, for the frost had lifted during the night, but rain and cold were as nothing to a nameless dread, a fear that had laid hold on Phil. He came to Belfast, straight on to Lyle Park, where he had never been since the night he had

crept through the gate to meet his bride.

Not with Sir Percy. Knew nothing of her! Had not sent

the little girl home in his carriage.

He reeled as he had never reeled in his deepest intoxication, his unshapen fear loomed large. Molly, his good, his beauti-

ful. It was too horrible.

"What am I to do?" he moaned hoarsely. It was a question to his empty heart rather than to the aghast gentleman. Sir Percy told him she had been to Ulster Hall with a gentleman he knew. He would see him at once and wire the news to Sea View Cottage. He poured out a glass of wine, and held it to the lips of the prostrate man. Phil tried to swallow it, but something in his throat was choking him. It was the

swift cold truth that Molly, his darling child, had gone under with this unknown gentleman. His heart knew it. In that dark, dark moment, the old man covered his face; she had

gone from him for ever; she had gone to shame.

"Madalina," he cried, "Madalina"; not the girl he called, but the dead woman who bore her. He tottered to the carriage Sir Percy had ordered to take him home. He had got his death-blow, the poisoned arrow had told home; he could go on very little longer. Sir Percy engaged a private detective. He followed Deloney the entire evening, but he, stung to the quick by Sir Percy Lyle's blunt accusation, mad with drink, mad with apprehension, stopped at nothing to save himself from exposure. He deliberately wrote a letter, which Sir Percy received by the first post next morning. The gentleman's face flushed in open disgust, and poor Phil, to whom he read it, closed his eyes in death, with the certain damnation of his child ringing in his ears.

The detective was withdrawn, and Deloney, who had become cognisant of the shadowing, breathed more freely; but he was terribly cut up. It lashed him like a whip to be told by his own familiar friend he did not believe him. All that was man in him reared, but it was the sober truth, and he dare not kick. He tried to tell himself things would blow by, and to appease the unrest and uneasiness of those days he drank and gambled harder than ever. Already he was beginning to find that Sin demands a high wage; that the Forbidden is a costly luxury.

#### CHAPTER VI.

A FEW months slipped in. Molly's heart was pierced; the actual truth was come. She had learned many things; it was terrible to find Denny not the boy beautiful of her own ideal. Heavens! Why did she not believe? Why let herself be borne on until the crue! proof had blasted her? Crawford had known, had warned her, but alas, alas—and yet she loved him. His promises, his love-making, the pathos of his voice, were echoes in her bosom of endless music, never hushed, always singing, always noping, always whispering away back in her deepest thoughts.

She was standing in a magnificent drawing-room before a pier glass. Amid the rich colouring and golden sunlight that filled the room she looked so white and dazzling, so intensely beautiful that a consciousness of her own power grew upon her as she stood there before herself. Denny loved her beauty, had steeped himself in it, had drunk it into his very veins. All the power in her woman soul swelled, her eyes glowed and her cheeks, her lithe figure straightened.

If woman could, if anything under Heaven could, she would make him marry her. He would give her her honour back; that was what she wanted; she would be satisfied with nothing else. By any by he did, but not by the way she anticipated

-in his own way.

It was mid-day and everything was unusually still. She sat down by the open window, the morning paper lay idly on her lap; her face lost its high glow and excitement, the ever-recurring weariness, the tired feeling necessitated by this constant beating back of shame—shame before herself crept upon her. It was a hot day, and her tired hands held limply the newspaper. She closed her eyes and leaned back in the easy chair. The memory of her home came over her: the cool garden with the mingling odour of the mignonette and bean blossoms blown about by the summer zephyr; the children rushing about wild with merriment at the sunshine;

her father gazing dreamily at her; the mother baking griddle cakes for the tea—it came before her so vividly that it was painful. That her father suffered she knew well, but that he had sunk under her absence she knew not. In her deepest heart there lay the belief that the day would come when she would go to him and get his forgivness and blessing on herself and Denny, but not yet, she could not face him yet.

She opened up the paper to stifle the burning rising in her bosom, and her eye caught a familiar name. It was Huntley, who for the sake of the one who was far away strove long and

earnestly to trace her. It was a line in the obituary.

"Suddenly, from apoplexy, at his residence, James Huntley, Esq., of the Queen's Island Shipbuilding Firm." The girl's eyes fastened on it, her lips parted, the faint colour in her white cheeks faded. Dead! Willie's friend dead! Up came that evening he had brought the letter; then that day at the photographer's, the concert, and all the irretrievable past that led to this moment. The tears crept down her cheeks, bitter and salt; a friend, a real friend was gone. It seemed but yesterday since he came upon her in the little house up Shankhill; and then that visit to the gaol-oh, that visit! and that betrothal; her bosom heaved and her pale lips gasped. Crawford was the one object in her mind that she could not force one way or the other; the fearful fact of his betraval, of the broken pledges, was like a dark, big rock, immovable and fearful. If she were only married-only married, it would not be so awful; but to break from everything for this. Her pale lips whispered, but no sound came from them. She wanted to pray for Crawford's pardon, but her voice refused. No words echoed that agonized cry of her soul-that dreadful dread of the part she had played to her childhood's comrade and friend. A step was on the passage; she dried her eyes quickly and composed herself, for tears or emotion were tabooed in this rich and pleasureseeking house. She lifted the paper hastily and spread it out before her. Again a name, a more familiar one, looked at her. It was her own—the one she had been so proud of. It was not in the death notices.

"Sir Percy and Lady Lyle return to Lyle Park after their tour in Italy next week. Great preparations are going for-

ward to welcome the bride and bridegroom."

Molly's face lost its pale rigidity, its strange expression;

a subtle yearning wound its way through every tissue of her woman heart. It came with the word bride. Bride, bride, bride, her mind repeated. Bride, bride, bride, her heart beat. Bride, her pulse throbbed, bride.

Would the sweetness of it never come to her? Would it never? She rose and paced the room in semi-hysteria. Aha! She was feeling the awful remorse that women feel who are tempted out of their narrow way. Oh, the blight of it, the dark of it, the unspeakable burden of it upon soul and spirit. A slight rustling of the golden satin draperies of the pertiere, the door opened softly, and Delon-y walked in.

" My dearest."

She paused in her walk and suffered his embrace without

a word.

"I have run in," continued he, "to tell you I cannot keep our engagement for to-morrow. A friend of mane, Mr. Huntley, is dead. I wish to attend the funeral."

She raised her suffering eyes to his bright, pleasant ones.

"Are you engaged to-day?"

"Well, yes," he said, slowly, but added gallantly, "My engagements, of course, are second to your wishes." coloured as she might of old.

"Take me out," she said simply. "I want to go out."

"For a drive?"

"Yes, or a walk."

"Well, go and dress," he smiled, as he touched her brow

lightly with his lips.

This was her first direct request during the months that had gone by, and he did not refuse. He had been rather taken back that she took things so quietly; they had had no words, no scenes as yet. Perhaps in the first days she let herself go as fully as he did, drank the draught that their love mixed without one qualm, unmindful that the bitter would vet gall the very soul within her, but to-day, and many days back she had felt the taint and shuddered with that shudder that knows no description. Denny had not been able to make her out. He saw that she did not demoralise. he had not been able to make her drink, or smoke, or gamble; she was still his girl-love, simple and good, and his own feelings toward her had not diminished in any way.

Molly got on her things. As the operation proceeded a swift idea swept her mind. She stopped aghast at its bold-

ness, then a dark lambent fire blazed in her eyes, she glanced swiftly round the room afraid that her fiery secret resolution had conjured up witnesses. Then she resumed her toilet in repressed eagerness. Before she was through, the lady of the house entered the room. Molly had not asked her permission to go out; this was an infringement of the regime not permissible.

"My dear, where are you going?"
"Out with Lieutenant Deloney."
"Smith, my dear, Mr. Smith."

Molly buttoned her glove in silence. Had she been anyone else but the fascinating young favourite of Mr. Smith her lot would have been different. The lady arranged the back draperies of her dress and surveyed her satisfactorily.

"My dear, do not be long. I have some letters for you to

write."

The girl coloured vividly; her determination in its new fierceness burned as it were on her countenance; she was glad to escape to Deloney. As she sat down a moment while he exchanged courtesies with the lady, apprehension touched her it was in connection with Denny himself; would oppose her carrying out her but her lips closed tightly: he did or did not she would make this purpose good. Denny took her on his arm, and together they went down the staircase and out into the world. Molly drew her breath deeply and lifted her poor eyes to the blue sun-sky. was the first time since that frosty day that she had looked upon the sky save through the gilded horror of that house. A feeling of deliverance, of relief filled her; she longed to cry out in thankfulness, in honest thankfulness.

One pretty face between the curtains of the front windows watched them away, arm-in-arm; its black curls shook fiercely and little pearly teeth quashed in rage and hatred and envy.

"It's her." she breathed in low, hot accents: "that vellow-haired girl that has stolen him from me. I hate her, I'll kill her"; but her rival had gone for ever beyond her pale. Such had been Molly's resolve, and she made it good. That house had seen the last of her.

# CHAPTER VII.

THEY drove up Shankhill. Molly chose it, and Deloney was rather pleased than otherwise; they were less likely to stumble

upon anyone who knew him.

The summer day was cloudless, the sky as brilliant as an Italian one; they went on far up the road, past—the low whitewashed houses and the old mouldering grave-yard where the dead of the last century sleep. Molly had yearned to look upon these familiar scenes without an idea of the trial it would entail. As they neared the Round Church, with its white circular masonry clear in the sun-blue, a sinking in the heart weighted her. Here she had learned to pray, and here all her ideas of God and Heaven were born; the very bricks

reproved her.

The old hills before them were aglow in the mid-day sun, beautiful always, but in the summer sunlight where are there such mountains? Their big rugged faces streaked with limestones beam down on the roaring city below; silent, steady, sublime, always the same. Time works no havoc on them as she does on the children that are raised at their base. Molly trembled. How different life had become since last she looked on the old hills. Crawford had been at her side, a son as it were of these hills; she felt they typified him, that he was just the same as of old, true and good and immovable, while she—

"How warm it is," said Denny.

"Yes," she assented.

"It suits vou," he complimented. "You are looking charming." And she was, her face rosy under the big white hat with the drooping plumes. She wore a handsome dress of Japanese silk—a sheeny, changing coloured material then much in vogue. Round her neck hung a thick gold necklet; inside the pendant was Denny's photo and a soft raven curl, glossy and smooth as satin.

Presently the car drew up at a wayside inn, an old snug place that the whole country side frequented—old Rosie Devlin's. After some slight refreshment they dandered on up the roadway slowly, leaving the car to await them. They sat down on a bench that was fixed under a big chestnut tree that grew on the roadway. Many a tramp slept on this bench, and the pedlars rested and yarned and smoked joyfully beneath that jasper shelter. Denny lit a cigarette, and Molly gazed as if fascinated at the scenery around—the rolling meadows, the little snug village of Ligoniel, whose mill chimneys made distinct dark bars in the sunny air, and there, snow-like and glistering over the emerald grass-lands spread the long, long, breadths of linen.

Below was Belfast buried in mist, but here no cloud. no smoke blurred the beautiful sky or tainted the pure air. Everything was fresh and sweet, the birds sang up to the molten sun, the bees and butterflies flitted from flower to flower, the cows lay lazily shutting their soft eyes and chewing the cud, happy in the silent glory that enveloped all things.

Presently the silence was broken by a rush and a broken cheer; it came from the children of the school-house (Forth River) sitting there on the river bank. The little ones were out to eat their luncheon. Denny was enjoying his smoke; it was so deliciously cool under the tree, and the landscape was charming, but Molly, torn with the torment of her position, suffered; she toyed nervously with the ribbons on her parasol.

"Denny."
"Yes."

"I want to speak to you."

He took the cigarette from his lips, and blew a tiny stream of smoke slowly into the warm, sweet air. "Something is coming," he thought, and sure enough it was.

"Very well," he replied, without lifting his eyes from the

floating smoke.

She looked at him; there was a marked contrast between his easy happy carelessness and her burning soul. She steadied herself to keep calm, and murmured in low, earnest tones:

"You remember your promise, Denny?"

"My promise," he queried, with uplifted brows.

"Yes. the marriage one."

"Did I ever make one of that kind?"

She turned livid, her gasping bosom rose and fell violently, her trembling fingers clasped and unclasped around the carved handle of the parasol.

"Denny," she said, mastering herself bravely, "surely such promises, such pledges are not hollow and false?"

He threw the cigarette away and took her hand.

"Have I not been faithful, Madalina? No woman has been to me what you are."

"It was true; his voice rarely took that particular expres-

sion; it calmed and pleased her somewhat.

There was still a chance so long as that remained. The wrong might yet be righted, the future saved. She grew pale before his broad, black glance; there was much to say

"If that is so you cannot refuse."

"Why should we marry?" he breathed.

Her face heated in insult and shame; she felt her position She who in her heart of hearts was as proud as Lucifer, having to bear a question like this. Surely the Roman lictor never wielded a scourge like this, but she held herself in by a giant effort. The children of the little school had formed in a ring on the green, and were singing in their game. The words came clear and distinct to the young man and woman under the tree, and were peculiarly suited to their conversation:

"Oh, say will you marry me, marry me?
Say will you marry me, my own true love."

Molly pulled off her gloves and passed them up and down before her face, a sweat was breaking on her, intense beyond endurance. Her fingers were full of rings; Denny caught the flash of them as they scintillated in the sun. He looked quickly into her face.

"Where is the ruby heart?"

It struck her as a bolt from the blue; it came upon the whole drift of her thought like an avalanche. The ruby heart! the pledge of her broken vow. It irritated, it maddened her. "Behind me," she retorted quickly, "in that den."

But this was not true; it was in her bosom, a beloved symbol of the unforgotten past.

"Who gave you that ring?"

He had asked her many a time, but nothing could draw her on this subject. She was too true an Ulster type to part with her secret easily.

Denny repeated his question, "Who gave you that ring?" He had often thought of it. Sir Percy's recent marriage had staggered his old idea, but yet he could not be sure.

Molly drew herself up. Crawford tall, brave, handsome, full of concern about her, breathing out a love he could never speak seemed to rise before her. She looked Deloney clear in the eyes.

"A man-a real, true man gave me it."

Something in her eyes, in her voice, stung the young soldier. He smiled cynically, and his reply struck her in the teeth:

"You were false to your real true man?"

The fury, the Irish fury surging in the woman, leaped on him.

"How dare you! You who tempted, who stole me from

him!"

Her hands rose up to tear the very eyes out of him, to avenge

the mortification, the purgatory of such a taunt.

"Madalina, you were easily tempted; believe me, your heart was mine; the keeping to the letter was neither here nor there."

She was blazing: "You deceived me ruthlessly, but it must

end either one way or the other."

And still the children sang merrily and brightly, their shrill voices floating over the sweet young clover and out and in among the bread and cheese hedge-rows and about these two who had tainted their young years.

"Oh, say will you marry me, marry me? Say will you marry me, my own true love."

They were a true rendition of all that Molly would speak. The girl gathered herself together for the finish of this terrible interview. They would have it out now and for ever.

"Do you refuse?" she asked.

"What?"

"Marriage."

He shrugged his shoulders, he did not want to marry: he was content as things were. Not that he did not love the girl, but he hated the thought of being bound legally, inflexibly bound. He was not angry; it was not worth while. Her little temper would soon spend itself, and they would continue as they were.

"Denny, we must settle it to-day. We must be engaged

or nothing."

"We are more than engaged."

"Unfortunately."

"Are you unhappy?" he asked, looking up.

"Yes."

"Then my love does not satisfy you?"

"Not without honour."

A silence fell between them, then the girl opened her wounded soul. She told him she was degraded in her own eyes, that every breath she drew was pain, that every thought was torment, that nothing on earth or in Heaven signified while this strain sat upon her. She could not look up to Heaven, for it was shut to such as she; she dare not look down to hell, for it was open, and the world had no place for her but its Gehenna.

"If you only marry me, if you only give me my marriage lines to show myself, to show my father and my little sisters, to show my God," she said passionately "I will not ask for public recognition; you can live as free as ever you were among your own people, unannoyed and unmelested by me."

"Madalina, you are splendid; you would be great upon the

stage."

"Upon the stage," she repeated. "I am upon the stage, the stage of Shame; my evil angel is grinning at success. My good angel is weeping over my failure, while you, the managerauthor of the drama, sit there—calm, pleased, unstung by any tear of my wounded heart. Shame upon you, Denny, Shame. I never deemed you would have brought me so low as this—and there in the future, that other shadow; I can never approach it, I can never live to it except you marry me."

"Live to what? What do you mean?"

Her gaze fell; the colour swept her countenance deep and guilt-like, she could not speak; the girl felt as if the blame was entirely her own; the silence between them became

charged.

His pale aristocratic face flushed like a common butcher. He felt insulted and angered; such a contingency had never arisen. He was unprepared and cowardly before it; she was conscious of the shock to him, and murmured in a low broken tone:

"Do not be alarmed, I will kill myself before—before—. But when I do so, remember whose fault it is. Remember

that yours is the hand that really is guilty.

" Madalina!"

"I could not bear to own a nameless, a curse in heaven's

sight, a bye-word among men."

The agony, the hopeless note in her voice smote him, and as he looked at her, so young, so rarely beautiful, it came home to him that he had played the game badly, that it was sad to have her thus, and then this other.

There was something low, fearfully low and degrading in the idea of illegitimacy; it rose upon himself like something beastly. This ceremony, this damned ceremony, must

after all be gone through.

"Madalina," he said clearly, "I will marry you. I will do so at once and get it over. I intended to do so before. You remember I asked you that day on the Holywood Road; only for your own stubbornness, you would to-day have been my wife."

She glanced at him and saw he was in earnest. A relief, a joy so overpowering filled her that she tottered toward him

and sank in his arms in a dead faint.

## CHAPTER VIII.

HE leaned over her, and smoothed the gold floss off her brow. He chafed her hands, he called her sottly by her name. he spoke healing, soothing words, and by and bye her bosom heaved, and her deep soft eyes opened on him in a strange mingled look of yearning love and glowing triumph. Years afterwards that look haunted him, its peculiar pathos, its rich gleaming satisfaction and love.

"Denny, how good you are."

"Yes," he assented, never for a moment doubting it. "This heat is too much for you. If you feel well enough to be alone I will go down the road and bring up the car."

"You are so kind," she whispered.

"Dearest," he said, softly, as he bent his head and kissed her. She put her arms round him in a fond woman-way, and laid her face upon his shoulder. She was happy, so happy, so grateful, so indescribably grateful. The whole world had become full of heaven. He felt how tender and lovable was this beautiful girl of his.

"I won't be long," he assured her. "Now rest here."

He took off his hat gallantly, and went down the road gaily, She watched him out of sight; proud, proud, exceedingly of him, every fibre of her very being was bound up in her young dashing lover, who was so soon to be her husband. She forgot and forgave all that had come and gone, and in that rare high moment every pulse tingled with joy. He was out of sight. She lifted her face, and clasped hands to heaven in a very fervour of praise. Her lips moved, but He, only, heard that impassioned psalm.

She stood still a moment, surrounded as it were by her joy. The golden sunlight fell through the green boughs overhead in long beautiful shafts. She felt as if they were reflections of the Divine light and peace that were in her own bosom.

She stepped out from the tree and gazed away up the roadway. The scene was so familiar, and in this beautiful moment so delightful that a craving came on her to dander on nearer. She knew everything. There was the blasted tree

where the magpie built, there the fairy well, half-hidden by the tortured thorn; yonder the old beetling-mills and the sluice of the mountain-mills. What cherished spots they were in childhood. Never blackberries grew like those round the old rattling bettles; never was water so cool, so clear as in the fairy well; never surer augurer of good or evil as that magpie that flew out when the children cheered, and that roaring sluice, what a mystery to dear big eyes, and the fat pine cones that covered the "plantin' yonder, how familiar. Many a slipful she had gathered to light the fire. Time seemed sleeping: these old things were the same as years ago. Sleeping! Then why was she not the little dot that leapt about like a young lamb? She wandered on; her first life playing before her, out and in among the blades of grass—and Willie—Willie, he was the central figure in every picture of those days. She could not but remember him. She was thinking deeply; in very stress she spoke aloud.

"When I'm married, I shall tell him the truth. Denny was so dear I could not give him up. He will not be angry; he will

know it were better so."

Her voice aroused herself. Looking up she drew back involuntarily. Before her were the ruins of her grandfather's cabin, her old home. The roof was gone, the crumbling walls had sprouts of grass and weeds growing from little crevices here and there—the hearthstone was covered with moss. In her own little nook near to the old turf fire-place grew wild roses. Her grandfather's favourite nook near the window was covered also with great glowing wild roses, the ash-tree without leaned brilliant and gay over the broken gable, and at the old door-cheek the magnificent honey-suckle flourished fragrant as ever. Molly felt like gathering that great honeysuckle into her bosom in one loving hug. She had dearly loved it long ago, and as the rich heavy perfume filled her nostrils, and the exquisite delicate tinted colouring lay under her eyes, she was proud of her old lovely flower, and dared to think that the sweet wild honey-suckle could hold her own with any garden bloom.

The old place was given over hopelessly to ruin. No one had lived in it since the old miser died. Uncanny stories had crept about; nobody liked to pass it after dark. The notion was in the air that old Phil was still about. That down in the shop (the room where a weaver works is called a shop) the

noise of the flying shuttle could be heard at night. Molly was ignorant of all this, and stepped across the old doorless entrance and looked about, half sad, half amused. In a way it was hard to think that she had actually lived here. In her young flashing beauty; she looked like a goddess of an existing honoured Cult among the ruins of a fallen temple of a dead Fetish. How different this young lady in the expensive clothing from the shy, shabby, flaxen-haired mite who had romped and roved here. She began to gather a bunch of wild roses. They were full of perfume, those lovely mountainbred flowers. She gathered away, then noticing a big deepertoned one high up a bit just over her grandfather's favourite seat, she made for it. It refused to break, the tendrils and roots of the plants were twined into the old clod wall. She bent her whole strength to it, the crumbling wall swaved, the girl drew back in quick alarm. A low thud broke the silence, a cloud of dust rose up, a portion of the old wall had come awav.

She stood shocked and frightened, but unhurt, looking down aghast at the fragments. A familiar chiect was lying among the broken clods—her grandfatner's long-lost stocking—a coarse knee-sock of homespun yarn. She knew it well. It had been one of the old man's treasure purses; the best loved one, for his wife's fingers had knitted it. He had hidden it in the little cupboard in the wall, then built up the recess. At his death the closest search had been fruitless, now accident, chance, or that curious destiny that touches every

mortal some time of their life, laid it at Molly's feet.

Her heart leapt to her mouth. It flashed upon her like lightning why the old man persisted in sitting, even in the cold winter nights beside the window; how it was impossible to find this stocking at his death. She looked down eagerly, her very heart in her mouth, afraid to touch it. It was like gazing at the dead, like looking at a long buried coffin, suddenly unearthed. The shade of the old man seemed to have risen. It was money, their money, not the Lyles; her own father's money. Gladness rushed over her in overpowering force, expelling for a moment that awful sense of the presence of the old miser. She fluttered and bent over it; then drew back, longing, yet dreading, to handle this relic of the dead. Then a fear gripped her, the fear of strangers; some worker in the fields, some dairyman out with his cows, some-

one belonging to the cabins scattered about; they might see and question what she was doing in the miser's cabin. She searched the road, the uprising fields that led to the hills; but in all the adjacent country nobody seemed visible. This idea of someone coming along, someone seeing her, caught her. In haste, yet with a reverential hand, she stooped down, threw aside the lumps of earth, and lifted up the long heavy stocking, sound and good it was after its decades of interment, closed at the mouth with a stout linen thread, wound round it securely, and tied in the old weaver's knot. She knew that knot of yore, and deftly undid it. A stillness, a hush kept the very heart-beats of her bosom in, as with trembling hands and wide open eyes she opened the stocking. A folded paper was in the mouth, bleared and blurred and unreadable, then another paper, yellow and seared too, the folds cut with age as with a knife. It was printed in the old way with the esses like effs. It was a marriage certificate. It recalled her recent conversation with Denny. She, too, had been praying for her "lines." Here as it were, out of the very grave, came forth the badge of the old man's honour and loval love: nor was that all, in a little pig-skin purse was a plain wedding ring, a tress of dark brown hair, tied together with a narrow faded blue-ribbon. So the old, grey, stooped man, with his hair streaming down his shoulders, and his deep-set eyes and horny hands had had his romance. The tears crept to the girl's eyes; she remembered his silent lonely life spent hour by hour before his loom. It was sad, it was dark to recall, but behind it in his heart was this sweetness of memory and this faithful love. Nothing more, only gold, gold, goldsuch a heap. She lifted out a couple of handfuls, but out of such a quantity it made no gap. Sovereigns, yellow, tarnished, sticking together. Old Ulster spade guineas, old Georges, old Williams, early Victorias; but all good sovereigns. Such money the girl had never seen in her life. It was too good to be true, like a page from the Arabian Nights, but yet here were the coins under her eyes, in her own hands. Gold! Gold! Gold!

Her eyes burned, her heart beat high; every nerve tingled. She fancied she saw her father, his ecstasy, the straightening of his bent body. Her home-going would be easier now. Father would not be hard when she was married, and especially as she brought such news. What a sum of money!

She plunged her fine white fingers down again as far as they would go, and beyond them the sovereigns were wedged in a solid mass.

Presently she remembered Denny, and as she stood before the gold, and knew he was waiting down the road she hesitated how to act. He was a gentleman; he was ignorant of her early life. She hated to unbare it, to confess that almost her first sense of life, of memory, began in this old wretched mud cabin, besides the money belonged to her father; she must reserve her find as a treat specially for him. She thrust the old papers and things into the sock again, and tied the old linen thread round it. She lifted it-what a weight! It took her two hands; how was she to carry it? How get it to a place of safety? She had no bag; her pocket was too small. It was impossible to take it in her hands without Deloney seeing it. What was she to do? One of two things must be done, and that quickly; either tell Denny or bury it again. Had she known her father was beyond this world's riches or poverty her path would have been clear, Denny would have got every farthing. But in her ignorance Deloney was excluded, and she thought only of her father. There was nothing for it, but bury the stocking again—hide it deeply under the big mud-clods. It was ungenerous to thrust it back upon the faithful old earth, but there seemed no other way. Once married it would not lie here long; she and her father would drive up and take it away immediately. He was sure to be quite better now. He had been almost well in February, so she thought, as with quick fingers and the point of the dainty parasol she made a little hollow, put the stocking in. banked over it the big dry lumps of earth, and trailed the weeds and broken bucky bushes over it. It was anything but secure, but the desolation and superstition hanging over the old place were good guardians.

Her dress was ruffled, her hands dirty, and the excitement beating in her bosom intense. She shook her skirt, dragged on her gloves, and tried to calm herself to meet Denny. Gathering up a few of the discarded roses to excuse her absence and her tossed soiled appearance, she made down to the old tree. She had been away an unconscionable time. What

would Denny think?

When she got to the old tree Denny was not there. A secret alarm began to agitate her that he had been and was

gone, but nothing of the kind. Denny had been having a good time; he made himself agreeable and at home in any quarter. When he went back to the old inn, where their car was waiting, he found it filled—being dinner-time—bleachers from the adjacent bleach-green, and rope makers from the Rope Works directly opposite facing the inn with the high road between.

He got to talk to the men, as was his way, stood them a pint of stout, and finally they had him over the roadway, and showed him the rope-works. The owner himself, who lived close by, a fine hale hearty old man, joined them, and explained everything to the free-spoken dashing young stranger. Denny, who had never seen a rope-work, was highly diverted. He approached Molly, feeling like a truant, but she was so relieved to see him coming that she met him beaming, and there were no remarks on either side

He helped her on to the car, and as they passed the ropeworks and the inn the men about took off their hats, and

looked after Denny with a generous wish.

### CHAPTER IX.

THE car rushed down the hilly road quickly. "I'm going to take you," said Denny as they drove along, "to my old nurse's."

"Never again to ----?"

"No, I have always regretted that."

Her looks turned to him gratefully. It was pleasant to learn this, for that place had cankered her very soul.

"I will ask a year's leave," he went on. "We will go to

the Continent as soon as possible."

"Oh, Denny."

A whole volume of pleasure it opened up. Going to the Continent to see the famous and beautiful places so much talked of; those glorious dawns, those snowy hills and limpid lakes, the magnificent palaces, the hoary old churches, the wonderful old art galleries where the gems of genius glow and glisten. There was beauty in life still, and her longing dreams were yet to be realised. It was delightful, delightful. Denny pressed her hand. She was so easily unlifted, a very child in some respects; he liked it so. Almost all his lady friends had done the Continent, were fagged and fashed with every pleasure and amusement society had to offer. Madalina was so eager, so delighted, so interested, that it gave the thing a zest to himself. They were both in high spirits, and chatted gaily while they scudded into the busy city. Bright and fine was Belfast that summer afternoon. Molly, after her isolation, deemed no city could be more handsome than this throbbing. bustling place, with its drifts of people and big palace shops crowded with customers. Her future had become luminous, rose-tinted as woman could wish. Soon that something dark in her soul would dim away, that shrinking to meet her relatives or the world at large would be gone for ever. would be a wife—a wife with a place in the eyes of God, in the eves of men where shame cannot cast her black spell.

Denny was as good as his word, He took her to his old

nurse. The old matron received her hospitably for Master Denny's sake, but she was far from pleased, far from satisfied. She knew well the family would not like it, and she was living on the generosity of the family, yet for the moment the good woman could do nothing else but take the girl in. Master Denny had such a way with him that nobody could deny him, and then he said it was only for a few days.

The young lieutenant made an affectionate good-bye and promised to come round the next evening. He did so, and told her he had been making inquiries about the license, and in a day or two the affair would be over. He was getting a special license, and asked her what church she would like.

"Oh," she laughed, "any one. It does not matter. Have you a choice?"

"I? not I. Do you know I am a Roman Catholic?" he added truthfully. She coloured; she did not know it, but it was too late to cavil over now.

"You would prefer the registry?" she said.

"By no means; let us have the Church. Choose which

She chose the Parish Church. Denny noted it in his notebook. Then he asked her about her dress. He was particular about his own appearance, and now he was going to be particular about hers. He knew the girl had nothing but what she stood in. He made her write her measurement and what colour she liked best, and promised to send it to one of the big costumiers. She was to have a wedding dress after all. Some of the charm of marriage was still left. Her heart beat high; his thoughtfulness, his kindness, his tenderness toward her were wonderful; every little act was another tendril binding her closer. He came round a day or so later. He had taken out the license and given notice for the ceremony. It was to take place in a few days in St. Anne's Church, at eleven o'clock. Nurse and her son were taken into confidence partly; they were to go with Madalina to the Church, but Denny did not disclose that he was to be the bridegroom.

The morning came, bright rosy morning of June, full of hird-singing and glory-flecked clouds and golden sunshine. Molly had never closed her eyes the whole night—agitation, excitement held her in its masterful grip. Sleep was impossible, her happiness seemed more than she deserved, more than anyone could deserve, to marry Denny, happy, handsome, kindly Denny. And her father, how she longed for him, in her wild pulsation she decided the very minute the ceremony was over to go to him. Crawford! What of him? He was the only shadow in her joy. His disappointment would be terrible. He would curse her as a lie, but in spite of that, it was nobler, higher to go with her heart. She loved Denny best.

Very early that morning of the wedding, the wedding dress arrived. Molly gazed into the box before lifting it out with a look on her face that is indescribable—curiosity, happiness, love all blended. It lay so beautiful, swathed in soft silk papers; such a dress, such a soft shade, blue, blue as the Irish skies, and it was hers, her wedding dress. The girls in the spinning rooms where once she worked always declared blue was lucky to a bride. After a little further worship she lifted it out. It was a beautiful dress in soft rich cloth, made in the height of fashion, a tunic over the skirt, a tight fitting bodice with loose fish-mouth sleeves that revealed a lining of deep cream silk; the seams three thout skirt and bodice were piped with this same deep cream silk.

She was radiant. Never bride looked more beautiful. Her cheeks were full of colour, her eyes glowing with deep, intension, but she was feeling ill, the excitement of the previous days, the sleepless nights were beginning to tell upon her highly-strung system. Throbbed and throbbed and throbbed through her a wish intense as fire that all was over. She thought of Denny as he had left her the night before, so loving, so handsome, whispering deep into her soul that after to-morrow only death could divide them. Her lips had lingered on his in an entire devotion that was half idolatry. He felt it, and the consciousness touched him once more that

he was not worthy such love and such a wife.

The old Parish Church rose up sombre and solemn in the yellow sun, the graceful cupola shot into the brilliant cloudless sky a dark, slim bar. In the heart of the busy city the church stands, a sacred retreat amid the buying and seiling trade and traffic, worldliness and sin going on around; the very laurel trees adown the path are solemn and chaste, and emphasize the holy, reverent aspect of the old church.

Molly and her companion stole through the old portico, half-ashamed to be seen. Denny was to meet them at the church.

They were early; he was not forward. They lingered in the vestibule, then the beadle asked them were they the marriage party, and conducted them inside. The interior was dark after the sunlight, a hallowed lustre beamed in there. The chancel window showed our Lord staggering under His cross on the way to Calvary. There, framed in a shaft of deep-toned light, stood the aged chair that has lived through so many years of tortured history, and is so precious to the parishioners and the city at large. The empty pews, those sacred places of human prayer, seemed breathing out hushing, soothing peace. Everything was holy, whispering of God, of Righteousness, of Peace, of Pardon, bought by the suffering of Him staggering under the Cross.

Molly, who at her heart was deeply religious, heard a voice in her soul. She felt face to face with God. She bent her knee, she hid her face, grasping in some measure how far she had wandered from Him. She had had no God for many months—none but Denny. He had been her idol; that was her sin. She prayed for pardon, for grace to put things of life in their proper place, to keep God's sacred place clear and clean, far above even the highest and holiest of human love.

The moments had flown; she was not conscious of the fact for a long time. When she raised her head the clergyman had taken up his place and John Brown had crept in noiselessly. All was breathless. It was a solemn moment, and they were solemn vows she was about to make, and God alone knew how faithfully she would make them. They waited, the curate took out his watch, the verger moved about uneasily and gazed down the gravel path and across the gates unto the surging streets whose din and rattle found no entrance into the calm old church.

All was dim, silent and sacred. The sunlight slanted, no longer it lit up the picture of the Man with the Cross. An hour passed, another, many hours, the clock on the tower had rung beyond counting. The beautiful young girl sat as if turned to marble, her lips bloodless, her cheeks pallid, over

her countenance a hue like death had spread.

The clergyman murmured some blessing over her and led her into a cab. The wedding-hour, the wedding-day had passed, but Molly was not a bride.

It is eleven o'clock on that morning the wedding was to

take place. Denny is dismissing a car at the end of Royal Avenue; he is wearing his uniform, for he is at heart a soldier and had decided that, although his marriage was so secret he would go as what he was. He turned down Donegall Street and went on quickly toward St. Anne's Church. He had reached the gates; already his foot was upon the step, a carriage pulled up with a crash, he glanced round and saw it was their own family one. The horses were foaming, the coachman's face livid, for the blazing morning sun had beaten on it for two mortal hours. The carriage stopped; Denny's elder brother leaped upon the parement. Denny turned his young handsome face upon his brother's flushed one.

"Hallo, Vic," he said cheerily, but his heart fell.
"I've had a chase for you that is simply outrageous."

"For me?" said Denny, looking up at the clock tower—the hands had passed the hour one minute.

"How dare you do it!" said his brother.

"Vic, I will be home to dinner and explain."

"Explain! Heavens, what is there to explain? It is explained. The governor is furious. It is simply disgraceful."

They were a contrast these two young men, so darkly handsome, so very much alike, one flushed, angry; the other smiling but a lump like lead in his heart, an ashy hue gathering in his countenance. He looked helplessly to his brother; he had no clear idea what was up. Latterly his little love affair had been all in all, other matters had drifted with the tide. His brother was not speaking of his marriage, for Denny had been careful that no one, not even his brother officers, should know a syllable.

"What is it, Vic?"

"It's the two thousand you borrowed from Dunseith. If it is not met to-day that poor fellow is ruined. With the generosity of a gentleman he never refused you. But the meanness, the shabbiness, of going to him. It is on his

account, not yours, that I am here.

Dunseith had been one of the managers in the Deloney firm, and had recently started business on his own. He was a man without means except what he had saved from his salary, and this had been put into his business. Denny winced; the transaction returned to him vividly. This was the money he had borrowed to pay his gaming debts of those nights after that scene with Sir Percy Lyle.

"He must be paid," he said quietly; but glancing at the clock tower, he moved forward a step. "Wait for me at my quarters. I have an engagement, a very pressing one. will see you in half an hour; we must save Dunseith."
"Where are you going?" asked his brother.

"To oblige a friend," returned Denny, nodding towards the church.

"Who is it?"

"Denny paused; he was not given to reflection, but he deliberated whether he might trust his brother, his good brother, who had never left the path of rectitude. He decided Surely when he was going to do right Victor would help him out.

"Myself," he smiled.

"You," echoed Victor, stepping back, startled beyond

measure. "Did I hear you aright?"

"Yes," returned Denny. "I am going to be married."

"Married!" repeated his elder brother in sheer surprise.
"Surely you are joking me."

"Nothing of the kind. I am already late; meet me at my

quarters in half an hour."

"Easily, my young man," returned his brother, putting his foot across the little step as a bar. "When you have honoured me so far, who, if you please, is the lady?"

Denny hesitated, but what was the use; soon it would be

known everywhere.

"Miss Bennett," he replied softly.

Victor Delonev winced; he was hit hard. His refined, scholarly face flushed purple, and Denny grew white to the

lips; that name gave the past away.

"You," he cried angrily, "did it. Denny, I never felt shame until this moment." It was gross in Victor Deloney's eyes; he was painfully sensitive of Sir Percv Lyle's relationship to the family, the husband of their foster-sister and Denny's own fast friend.

"Come with me into the Queen's," he said, grasping Denny firmly by the arm. The Queen's is an hotel a few yards up

the street.

"No," said Denny, "I am but wasting time."

"Come," returned his brother almost fiercely, and pushed him toward the carriage.

Denny went.

"I will marry her," he said doggedly. That was sufficient in Denny's eyes to atone for everything; but such atonement Victor knew could never be made except at the price of family prestige and Denny's own standing in society, and he as his brother had reasons, strong personal private reasons, to withhold him from such a bond.

"You cannot marry her," he returned quietly.

"I mean to do so. I will do so."

"You will not. Do you forget you are a Deloncy, the honour of the family, the church you belong to? If you have fallen so low, then go, marry her?"

They had reached the hotel and went upstairs to a private room. Victor Deloney was upset, the affair about Dunseith dwindled into insignificance beside the like of this. could believe much of his scapegrace young brother, but this actually staggered him.

"The Church," he began.

"Church," sneered Denny, "She taught reparation in my boyhood. Has she expunged that from her ethics now?"

"You must be mad or drunk, or both, to think of such a thing. A heretic and a common girl who worked in a mill

I'm told."

"Some of us wrought in mills," returned Denny bitingly, "and of her religion I do not trouble myself. One thing I'm sure of, any faith under Heaven is better than what I've been nurtured in. You, a student of life, must be aware of it. I mean a man can't be good in it, he can't live his goodness, he can't meet temptation, he has nothing but an empty moral, a hollow form to take to his hungry, sceking heart. I say this from my own experience. Had you seen what I saw while on duty during the riots it would explain further. Right up from Castle Street to the cemetery gate, up the whole Falls Road, every step is dirted, every fresh passer-by is full of oaths, oaths, oaths; blasphemy strikes you in the very teeth, not the old, not the drunken, not the impure, but the young men and women, the flush of the church in health and strength, blasphemy is their every word. Yea, the very women with the infants at their breasts, the children under their teens, they simply wallow in blasphemy. If the Church is true, why is the life of her children so? I know nothing of, I care nothing for, your old books and doctrine, but look at these living men and women. Look at myself.

His brother's brow had darkened. He was a true child of the Church, it was as a spear into him to hear one word breathed against his faith; he would rather ten thousand times see his young, handsome brother stiff and stark as hear that he was false to her. An awful horror fluttered before him, the fear that Denny was very near that horror of horrors. "Has she turned you? Are you a Protestant?" he breathed in dark, distrait accents.

"No," returned the young lieutenant, "but I wish to God

I was anything but what I am."

He strode up and down the room in fearful excitement. His whole life seemed to be rising up before him, the time when he intended to be a good, noble boy, the time when his heart longed and ached for something, and he knew not that it was his spirit crying, vearning for its Master-Spirit the Christ. Then his creeping closer and closer to the Church, then when his heart was as it were uniting—fusing into her came the awful discovery, the awful consciousness of the gold lust of the Church. It killed the soul-seeking of that boy. Life came on; he was launched out. Sin was everywhere, sin that could be bought in the world's market-place, sin that could be sold—sold, back to God, for penance, tor confession, and for so much in masses, in tips to the priest, in bequests to charities. God, the great clean Spirit, would pass over all if the coin were plentiful enough. Loose and weak as Denny was, as he grew older he shuddered to think of sneaking up to God with Gold as restitution.

His elder brother passed over this tirade, as long as he was not turned, what he said was only froth. He bent himself now with all his ability to save him from this marriage. To this faithful son of Rome he was doing more than saving him from marriage, he was saving his own brother to the

Church, the mother of them all.

"Have you considered," he said slowly, "all it means. Father disowning you, the doors of the house closed upon you, your claim upon the family forfeited. You shall be ostracised, and by and by find yourself saddled with a hybrid wife. A woman whispered over, pointed out everywhere you show your nose."

"For Heaven's sake," cried the young man, "stop. I must go on, I must. She is waiting in the church at this very moment. I cannot be so cruel, the affair has gone

too far." He was crying down his own secret recoilings at this desperate picture; for Madalina's sake, for the sake of Yes, he must go on, but at such a moment it was terror to remember his family's extreme views upon religion. He would never be forgiven for marrying a Protestant; caste, character, were as nothing to that one important fact. No doubt his allowance would be stopped; he would have nothing to live on but his pay. If he could only pay Dunseith he felt it would be freedom, it would be happiness to shake off every shackle and go on with Madalina, sweet, lovely Madalina. She seemed already slipping from his hand. He saw her as she was last night, full of trust and love clinging to him with arms and eves that said more than ever tongue has said or pen has penned.

"Denny," said his brother, "let me make a bargain with you. I'll settle with Dunseith, I'll set you on your legs again if you abandon this mad freak." Denny paled.

"For God's sake do not tempt me. I—I—love—this girl,"

he gulped out.

"Nonsense," 'tis only a passing fancy; there are other girls in our own circle to love."

His younger brother's face flushed deeper and deeper.

"There are other considerations, Victor. I must go on.
I can not leave her. Madalina, my beautiful."

Tears were rushing to his eyes, darkness was filling his bosom, hatred, black and deep that never had been in his warm, hearty nature was showing her hybrid head toward his brother. The young man felt that his whole future was being wrecked, his happiness, his personal feelings, the girl's happiness and personal feelings were being trampled, sacrificed to caste, to Church, to the damned sentiments and insincerities of modern life. He had no moral power, had never experienced the real value of faith upon conduct, he had nothing to fall back upon, nothing outside himself to help him grasp his fate and mould it to his will.

"Victor," he cried, the tears blinding him. "I have nothing to give her but my name. Why do you keep me back?

Let me go to her, let me go."

His brother knew that he had won. "Pull yourself together," he said firmly, "I will go to her, I will see that she gets something to keep her. I will send her to America or somewhere." "And Victor-Victor-the child-the little one-you-you

-will-? for my sake, for poor Denny's sake."

He told him where to find her, then tore away through the sunny crowded streets full of darkness and grief and suffering.

"Once to every man comes the moment to decide For the good or evil side—
Then the choice goes by for ever."

The young man rushed, he neither knew nor cared whither. He was suffocating, breathless, hot, degraded in his own soul before himself. Exposure before Self is a terrible humiliation. He pictured Madalina waiting, watching, listening for his step in the big silent echoing church, then the doubt creeping up, the horror flapping in her face until finally it settled in her loving, tender heart, and there was no longer doubt, she was a deluded woman. Ah! long before any of the others deemed it Molly knew, with the sure and unerring instinct of love that the man of her heart had failed her. Denny understood her feeling in part, he tried to hide from it, to get free from the dark pursuing suffering of the girl, but it had come to stay, to stay to the very end within his bosom. While over and beyond her loomed another shadow indistinct but there.

The meridian of his happiness had passed, henceforth it

was to be gradually diminishing until all was over.

There is a sin unto death even in this life, death of all our beautiful hopes and feelings and emotions—death of peace and happiness in our bosoms. A sort of premonition came to Deloney that he had sinned that sin.

### CHAPTER X

VICTOR DELONEY sat before a glass of wine in the hotel lost in thought—deepest thought that could never be put into words. His pulses beat high, his nostrils dilated, his colour came and went momentarily; throughout his system a tremor passed like an electric shock. He walked up and down the room, and gulped down wine, until his nervous agitation

passed.

He could not but rejoice at the strange coincidence that threw him in Denny's path this morning. It was Fate, blessed Fate, that had intervened to save his dearly-loved but foolish young brother from such a mesalliance. His mind wandered on to Sir Percy Lyle. He half-believed the young baronet suspected Denny; certainly the old familiarity between these two had cooled since this girl's disappearance. It was a horrible shameless affair all through, nevertheless it was

impossible that Denny could make her his wife.

After some time he drove round quickly to his solicitors, and ordered them to pay within the hour the sum of £2,000, borrowed at 6 per cent. last February from Robert Dunseith, linen merchant of the city. After this act of charity he went home, and acquainted his mother of his strange adventure. The poor dear old lady was distressed and relieved. She quite approved of her elder son's conduct; it was ridiculous for Denny to think of marrying her; but it was a thorn into her old doting heart to know without a shadow of doubt from his own mouth that her darling young son had done so wickedly. Tears of real grief filled her eyes. How he could be so bad was a mystery to the calm lady sitting serenely in her drawing-room; nevertheless Denny could not marry the girl, most certainly not.

The subject occupied both mother and son the whole day. Finally it was arranged that after dinner Victor would drive round to Nurse Brown's, and have an interview with the girl. This was absolutely necessary, and part of his bargain;

besides old Mrs. Deloney was anxious and annoyed and

became uneasy to hear how the girl was.

Molly had never opened her ashen lips, her voice seemed to have left her. She sat still, with her cold white face utterly passionless and unconscious. Nurse had done all that was in her power, but to no avail. She remained silent, blank, speechless.

The good woman was much alarmed, and finally sent for a doctor. That gentleman was upstairs with Molly when Mr.

Deloney arrived.

He waited quietly to hear the medical report. Presently he got it; it was very brief. Her mind was unhinged, but, being young, and apparently had a good constitution, there was hope that by and by she would recover. In the meantime he could not do much; she must be kept quiet, and get nourishing food and be constantly guarded against accident. Mr. Deloney thanked him, gave him his card, and stated that all bills were to be sent to him, and remarked, en passant, that silence was golden. The struggling young medico made a mental note, and decided, thankfully, that at last the right

patient had turned up.

Mr. Deloney questioned nurse very closely, and was surprised to learn that Molly had been with her a very few days indeed. Nurse Brown had served the Deloney family for fully thirty years, and now enjoyed an easy pension from her former master. She looked upon the two young gentlemen of the family almost as her own, for she had suckled both of them, and took liberties with them that would have been unpardonable in any other dependent. She was much irritated by the affair of the morning, and the part she had been made play in it. She was very angry with Master Denny. The idea that he was marrying the girl himself never occurred to her until sitting in the empty church waiting for the bridegroom. Then as the waiting continued, and no bridegroom turned up, the truth flashed on her with lightning-like swiftness. Had one inkling of the thing dawned on her, Nurse Brown would have had no part in it. But she was a feeling, motherly woman, and the very finest of her woman-sensibilities were aroused at the heartless trick played upon the helpless girl. She spoke her mind out freely to Master Victor.

"I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen it with my own

eyes, to think that Master Denny, so kind and agreeable, could be so cruel; it's simply outrageous and wicked. I could beat him with my own hands; the poor thing's gone mad over it."

"We must do all we can for her," returned the gentleman

suasively.

"How dare he carry her on so far," said the woman, still angry. "A girl like that; I'll bet you there's not her match in Ireland the day."

"It was very wrong, nurse; very. No one regrets it more than myself, but Lieutenant Deloney could not make her his

wife. Her father was only a common hind."

"She hasn't the look of it; her face is kind of known to me.

I fancy to know it someway."

The good woman, long used to the refined handsome features of the higher classes was not to be deceived in Molly's face, but she little dreamt that this girl's mother long ago had stood in the nursery of Deloney Hall—a shy, curious, goldenhaired maiden—peeping coyly at the little cot where slept in happy innocence Baby Denny, the author of her own child's misery. The woman kept the impression, the vision of the face, but could neither recall nor fix where she had got it.

Mr. Deloney asked to speak to Molly. Nurse demurred, and explained that she was stupid and had not spoken one word since they were in the church; but he pressed her, so she led him up the staircase to the little room where Molly lay. He was curious to see this girl who had made such an impression on his brother. There had been some smothered talk about her beauty when she disappeared, and Mab had described her as looking that night of the Tietiens concert like their marble in the drawing-room, only more beautiful. Victor Deloney had not thought much about it; but now, before the fine white chiselled face, lying on the pillow, surrounded by masses of scintillating gold-hair, he paused. He was a scholar and had read many descriptions and poetical fancies of woman; he had stood before the glowing canvasses of Angelo and Velasquez, and the dazzling marbles of Phraxiteles, but neither pen nor brush nor chisel had conjured up so fair an image as this white, speechless reality, this common Shankhill girl. There she was, supreme in her beauty, even in her very helplessness she was incomparable. He gazed at her earnestly; he wanted to talk to her, to assure her of his sympathy and protection. His mother and he had discussed her future freely, and decided the wisest and most prudent course for her would be to emigrate. They were prepared to do handsomely by her, and secure her from monetary trouble, but she lay silent and unobserving, although her eyes were open and staring.

He looked at her fixedly, his black familiar eyes pierced for a second the blank of her mind, were as a streak of fire across

the dark of desolated reason.

Her cheeks turned scarlet, her dull eyes furious. She raised herself off the pillow, shook back quickly the yellow masses of her hair.

Nurse grasped the post of the bed in alarm, but the gentleman moved a step nearer the bed, pleased at this revival that might give him the opportunity he sought. His unpleasant duty would be best done quickly. But Molly took the initiative. "What do you want?" she asked, in a low haughty tone;

"I know your features"

The gentleman was not prepared for this. He had expected tears and cries and wild words. This was the calm dignity of a stung soul, the smart of a person who held herself and her suffering sacred. .

"Leave my room," continued the girl. "Nurse Brown must have forgotten herself to thrust a gentleman into my privacy."

"Pardon the intrusion," mumured the gentleman, colouring.

"It was done through the kindest motives."

"Sir, some kindness is cruel." His face was burning now.

"No one can regret more keenly than I what has happened. May I offer you my sympathies."

"You may not," she returned in the same tones; "I decline

your sympathies definitely."

Her glance pierced him; he shrank before it as before rebuke, fancying it charged him with sacrificing her reputation and her child's name to their family pride.

"I am sorry," he said.

"You need not be," she replied, waving him off with her hand.

He bowed and left the room. It was his first and only conversation with Molly Bennett, "the common hind's" daughter. Nurse bathed the girl's brow, and fed her with gruel. She was very ill during the night, moaning incessantly. Toward morning she fell asleep, and when the doctor came he found her somewhat better. He was delighted that the sullen silence was broken, and gave the nurse instructions to encourage her to talk; that speechless pause of yesterday might have degenerated into an eternal eclipse. Her chances were greater if she talked; it would loosen, so to speak, her mind.

The days were in and the months, and Molly talked; talked, talked with passionate outburst that left her tame and helpless. Sometimes she spoke of Denny, handsome Denny, who was to be her husband. Again she would sing some simple song of other days, putting into it a passion of expression and teeling that turned it into fierce and barbarous music. At other times, when worse than usual, she muttered about a red heart, a broken troth, an outcast child crying to God for vengeance; then a frenzy of joy would catch her, and she would laugh that mirthless, mindless laugh of idiocy, and putting her white hands together over her mouth would whisper gold, gold, gold in the miser's old mud cabin.

Nurse Brown was terrified and afraid there was n.cre

between "them two" than anyone else could tell.

Denny had never seen Molly since. The ss of her mind had been kept from him; he was totally ignorant of it, nevertheless his heart failed him as the days went by. He was afraid she would never live through what was coming, for

well he knew the girl had no heart to fight her battle.

He longed intensely for her; she belonged to him, was bound to him, intermingled with every thought. Those ties of intimacy, those chairs of love had fettered him; now that he was free the girl was dearer to him than ever. He missed her, his very thoughts were empty, the salt of life had lost its seasoning power. Time hung on him, gaiety, pleasure, everything was tasteless and wearying. Aha,

"Evil on itself shall back recoil."

The force of that rebound, the unerring accuracy, and the bitter preciseness are fearful; it squeezed his young warm heart in merciless justice. Sin is a terrible game to play. The chief actors were only in the first stage of its results—the girl in insensible misery, the young man with his heart and feelings lacerated, the sun fading out of his bright young day. He was very different from the bright careless good fellow of last summer. He was soberer, but gambled deeper, and he seemed to have conceived a repugnance to women, frequenting

the mess more, and companying with his brother officers assiduously. He was very seldom at home; once there had been an almost open rupture. It occurred on a Sunday night. For many years it had been an institution in the Deloney family, no matter what company were in the house, that some of the clergy of the city were there for dinner. After dinner there were cards and wine. This particular night there were three clerical gentlemen at the table. Denny was not in an amiable mood, and their presence in such force did not tend to soothe him, for in his deepest soul he traced the blame of his misguided life to the church. Somehow he fancied that he would have been married to Madalina but for Apart from that it was a long day since he lost his reverence for the clergy, since he believed they gave tone to the table and that the family were honoured by their presence. He sat silent, listening to the general conversation. They talked on many topics, presently it veered round, as it usually did, to the Irish question, and many a thrust was given to the hated alien—the Invader, England; then it became more particular, and they spoke of the extreme poverty of the Irish

Denny raised his head. In his eyes the poverty of the people was not a question of State or taxes. Looking straight

before him he asked in clear, incisive tones:

"Why should the people be poor when the Church is rich?"

A silence fell; no one answered. The young man's father thought he must have taken too much wine, but his elder brother saw that he was painfully sober; if he had had a little too much everything could be looked over. Denny resumed in the same clear steady tone:

"No society, economic, social, political, or civil; no throne no empire is so rich as the Church. Nineteen centuries of every nation's superstitious devotion have emptied themselves into Her coffers. I ask you in God's name why should any

Catholic of to-day be poor?"

There was again complete silence. Old Mr Deloney was much annoyed, his elder son angry. The onslaught was so out of place at their tather's table upon their guests that he trembled with rage. He trembled also for other reasons—his great reverence for the Holy Catholic Church. She was above question; he believed implicity in Her Sacred Immunity.

"Mr. Deloney, do you forget the Church is a Mora! Mission to the World?" ventured one of the clergymen.

Denny never shifted his eyes, but his heart was beating wildly, every nerve was on the strain; he was really gasping, thirsting for the answer—the refutation they would make. Something like the agony a husband feels when impeaching his wife, expecting the listener to wipe out and contradict every charge. Every true Catholic has felt this strange suffering when his eyes open to things as they are in the Church.

The answer stung him, and his accent became more

envenomed and biting.

"Moral Mission," he repeated mockingly. "Moral! The Galilean said Feed. If He returned to earth now He would ask the Pope, while He pointed to the treasure chests in the Vatican strong-room, to investment rolls, to property deeds, to bonds, to the invaluable works of art, etc., etc. "Why are my children hungry and naked and houseless? Have you fed my lambs? Christ said to the Jews, 'You have made my Father's House a place of merchandise—a den of thieves.' Could He say other to His own Church?"

"Surely you do not imagine the Church could feed and

clothe the universal poor of her people?"

"Why not? It is His command; besides, she has the money. The Church's overpowering riches came from the peoplethe people of Yesterday and the people of To-day. The people of To-morrow may cease to contribute, further they may demand their own again."

"Denny," said the young man's father, "you are going too far. You forget yourself."

"Forget myself? certainly; but I remember the Poor the world over, and the Church is rich solely through them. or their forefathers. Everything is theirs, yet they are starving. They may yet take the control of the entire Church into their hands; old blinded Samson may rise in his strength vet. Vox Populi, vox Dei.

"Stop, Denny, withdraw it," said Victor in a voice full of

repressed fury.

"No," returned the young soldier. "The wealth of the Church should be for the people. Every Catholic pauper is a blot upon Her escutcheon. There would be no Catholic poor if the Church disgorged. Why should the Church be rich and her people poor? She is hoarding while the people starve. You remember the great final sum-up. It is based on practical philanthropy:

"I was hungry . . . . . . "I was thirsty . . . . . .

"I was a stranger
"I was naked
"I was sick . . . . . .

"I was in prison . . . . .

"Amen I say to you; as long as you did it not to one of these least ones, neither did ye do it to Me. (See Matt. xxv., verse

"Gentlemen, there rises to my mind at this moment a scene of poor people—hungry, barefocted, scarcely clad, flocking over miles of rough country road to the Chapel. If ever children came to a parent for sustenance and help, those people came to their Mother that day with hungry bellies and bleeding feet and starving souls. What did they get? A moral stone, a penitential scorpion. But if thine enemy hungers, ye feed him, if he thirst ye give him water. But when thine own child asks bread ye reach him a stone, when he wants an egg ye reach him a scorpion. Because he is your own ye neglect him; ye sit upon him. It cannot, it will not go on much longer."

He rose and left the table and the room to the relief of everyone. His father could not restrain him. Victor would have flung him out by the neck, only for making a scene and a scandal before their guests and the servants of the house. It was painful to see the old gentleman doing his best to soothe the ruffled feelings of his visitors; each one of those clergymen left Deloney Hall that night the richer by a good five pound note slipped quietly without a word into their hands.

He approached Denny himself. He was fond of his boy, but such conduct could not go unnoticed. It was so unlike his

merry good-hearted son.

"Denny, my lad, what has come over you? Tell me what

made you say those hard things of the Church?"

"Father, last summer I saw the poverty, the distress of the people. In my childhood I saw the same up the country. It is intolerable, it is wicked that they should endure this, while the Church is full of unknown millions. If I had my will I would begin at St. Peter's. I would sell every picture, every

statue, every relic, every ornament, every vestment from the Pope's down to the altar-boy's surplice in our own chapel. Every stock and share, every building, church and school; everything—in Spain, in Italy, in France, in Ireland, in the world would be turned into cash; invested, and the dividends distributed between the Catholic poor of the world and the upkeep of the clergy."

The old gentleman put his hands up as if warding off a

blow.

"Denny, Denny, this is awful; the Army is ruining you. Come out of it, go to your duty; ask her pardon, and she will

forgive you."

The young man finished bluntly, for he was suffering himself. The Church could work with free hands if she disgorged, the people would be in a physical condition to receive her ministrations. "Feed my lambs" is our Lord's distinct order: The Church must obey it if she is to continue. But apart from that Her money came from the people, and they should get the good of it.

Old Mr. Deloney was really vexed and alarmed. He took the matter to his bishop, and it was arranged that the young lieutenant should be regularly and faithfully prayed for, and everything that could be done was to be done to get him out

of the Army.

Denny made it a point never to dine at home on Sunday evening after that night. He wondered at himself afterwards how he had spoken so long, and how he had ventured into the sacred preserves of the Church, but he was glad for the sake of the three millions of silence in his country. The secret opinion that he had formed remained, that the Church is the people's, not the pope's, or the priests, and the coming day when that truth would be established seemed to him drawing nigh; the sufferings of the people were almost exhausted, and then—and then—and then—would it be Vox Populi, Vox Dei.?

# CHAPTER XI.

TIME had worn in, Molly did not die—to Victor Deloney's regret and Denny's intense relief; but after the birth came a long, slow, lingering ill-health that left traces on her unwrinkled face, and cropped the lovely golden hair. Poor Molly! what a wreck of the girl of one short year ago!

Her mind had not come back, but she was better, slightly conscious of something missing, often searching the nurse's face with the request for what was gone in her bewildered eyes; but the moment was evanescent, and she would be dark and groping as hitherto. The infant amused her; she played with him as another child might. The mite grew a great fat baby, full of health and spirits; he developed a great inclination to drag Molly's short hair and to leap at the firelight. The young mother was very tender with him; it was touching to watch her excessive gentleness with the sturdy child. Nurse had had him baptised. She named him after her own son John. Had Molly had her senses this might not have been his name; but it is a noble name, and the little one was named and throve.

Molly grew stronger little by little, and the doctor stated that as her health improved her mind would gradually come back. He gave a great deal of study to this case, only too much in Victor Deloney's opinion. One day, discussing the case with him, the doctor told him that there was not the least doubt that ultimately her mind would recover; if a shock could be produced that would thrill the whole realm of her thought,

it might precipitate events.

Mr. Victor Deloney made no reply. His own opinion that the case was hopeless was unchanged; his intention was to have her removed to a private asylum before long. He wished to have her out of the way before Denny became aware of the condition of her mind; besides, he had an unpleasant dread of the whole story leaking out, and being talked over in every drawing-room about the city; and there was Sir Percy Lyle—

what could be said to him? If she had only died, what a blessing it would have been; what a difficulty it would have cleared away. She did not die, nor was there the least prospect of it, so there was nothing for it but get ner as quietly and speedily as possible into an asylum. He wrote himself to several institutions, and the matter was under consideration when a hitch occurred that upset everything. One day Denny was feeling exceptionally bored and dull. The longing, so often repressed, so often put aside, assailed him again, to see Madalina—to see her, only to see her, yet he hesitated; he hardly knew how to face it. Would she receive him after all that had come and gone? But the yearning, the old feeling to look upon her, no matter how the meeting went, was too strong for him. He flung himself round disturbed and uneasy.

"What difference can it make?" he muttered. He got on a car and drove off. As he spun through the early spring evening he grew calm and pleased, he felt as if going to a treat. Nurse was disturbed exceedingly, and refused flatly to let him see her, but Denny had not come for this. While they expostulated in the little kitchen Molly, who was in the little parlour rocking the cradle, began to sing. Her voice came clear and sweet through the thin partition wall. No listener

could believe her mind was unhinged.

"I do believe, I now believe
That Jesus died for me.
That on the Cross He shed His blood.
From sin to set me free."

Denny turned away; a rush of remembrance broke over him that was keenest pain. What would he not give to be as he had been that Sunday evening up Shankhill on the outskirts of that crowd. What would he not give to have Madalina as she had been that evening, so beautiful, so simple, so good and true.

He went forward, and opening the little parlour door, went in. Molly was sitting on a hassock beside the cradle, which was drawn up before the fire, for the evenings were chilly. There was a frightful change in her since last they met. She was pale and worn, and bore that nameless look peculiar to those mentally afflicted; her dark, plain dress hung limply round her tall thin figure.

The opening of the door made her look up startled, for Denny's hand was not so deft as Nurse's. Her large grey eyes extended in horror; in the excessive pallor of her face they looked ghostly. She looked at him a full minute, then her features gradually contorted, a spasm of frenzy caught her. In her dark mind he was the image of her suffering, the something that had hurt. She threw her arms over the cradle as if

to protect its human freight from a similar doom.

Denny stood speechless. He had been expecting to see her ill somewhat, but nothing like this. She was as unlike his Madalina as woman could be. The face long and thin, the cheeks hollow, the nose sharp, the rich hair stubbed like a convict's, the soft shy eyes, full of a something he trembled to name. After the first frightful shock of disappointment, surprise, grief, a nameless horror settled on him. He advanced slowly and held out his hand.

"Madalina," he said softly, "speak to me."

She shivered as he neared her, then snatched up the child out of the cradle, and ran cowering to the further end of the little room, turning her face to the wall.

He went to her, and she gave a mild maniac cry that rang distractingly through the whole house and brought Nurse in.

Molly turned eagerly to the matron.

"Save me! Save the baby! This is the devil! I know him; he comes every night. I see him in the dark; he wants the child."

She spoke in a high, wild key, and as she clung convulsively to the matron the frenzy flamed in fiery streaks upon her cheeks and in her wild rolling eyes: every nerve was strained, her horrible fear was pitiable. The infant, crushed in her mad clutch, was screaming, and altogether it was a terrible scene.

Denny's heart almost forsook him; he felt like burving his face in his hands and weeping. Oh, God! this was the meeting he had been longing and yearning for: this was Madalina. Nurse implored him to leave, but he would not, and using his full strength he forced the child out of Molly's arms, and made Nurse take him out of the room.

Molly wrought in frenzy: the perspiration poured down her face. Denny held her hands in his. Presently he went into the kitchen himself, and brought in a basin of cold water and

immersed her hands and bathed her brow himself.

"Madalina," he breathed, "do you not remember Denny, your own Denny, who loved you?"

She cowered from him like a frightened animal, her great

eyes set on him in that strange, terrible expression peculiar alone to women deranged. But he was going to do all he could to dispel her strange fear of him.

"I am Denny," he went on, "don't you remember how fond we were of each other?"

She still looked at him in that awful way that made him sick. It was bitter to find his beautiful girl like this, but she began to quiet, her hands to cease trembling; his voice soothed her like some familiar strain half-forgotten. As she listened she tried to think, then she said wearily, still looking at him:

"I cannot remember; I dream about a queer house, then a church with trees about it. I went into the church to get married, but nobody was there; it was all empty; it turned into a sepulchre-Jesus' sepulchre. I saw the angel in white sitting there, but Jesus was risen. He was before me in the air with His Cross. The curate said to me, 'God keep you from evil, child.' Then it became very dark. I dream it over and over every night."

There was silence; Denny could not speak He had brought her chocolates, remembering how partial me had been for

them; he gave them to her now.

She played with the box as a child might, and presently said shyly:

"Once my sweetheart gave me these."

"What was he like?"

"Ah!" she said dreamily, "he was Adonis."

"So good-looking." She bowed solemnly. "Tell me of him."

"He was a soldier," she said proudly. "I think I loved him for that, but I only saw him a few times in uniform-and he was so handsome then. He asked me to be his wife, and I refused, while my very heart was breaking."

"Why did you refuse?"

"I was honourable. There was the red heart."

"I could not love thee dear, so much, Loved I not honour more."

"That was my case," she said softly. Her mind had clung through all its darkness to those little things that had made her life; in a way it was more pitiable than total eclipse.

Denny sat very still; he was almost overcome. He had never experienced uselessness, helpless, useless, nerve-killing uselessness until he sat here before this terrible wreck of his once blooming, beautiful love.

The baby inside began to fret. The sounds arrested Molly;

her hearing seemed abnormally acute.
"That is my baby; I must go to him."

He took her arm and supported her into the kitchen. The infant grew quiet with his mother, and they came again into the parlour. It was growing dusk. Nurse drew the blinds and lit the lamp, and Molly asked could she have supper now, and this gentleman, perhaps he would join her. She liked him; he reminded her of somebody very dear to her. Nurse Brown smoothed her apron in ill-humour. She was much put about. Master Denny should not have come at all; now he was staying quite too long; besides, she had nothing tasty enough to set on the table before him. She must needs put on her bonnet and visit the pastry-cook shop, and so these pair were alone with their little child. Babv crowed and leaped with delight at the lamp, and pulled Molly's short hair unmercifully.

"Show me your baby."

"No, you can talk to me, but you must not see him. Pigs, cows and babies have been blinked. You have an evil eye: I

hate your eyes. This is a peculiar baby."

"He is a handsome one," said Denny softly, as he looked at his own child. Even in infancy the child's beauty was unquestionable; he had the pure complexion and the refined cast of Molly's features, but little John had the black glossy eyes of his father, a distinctive feature in the Deloney family for many generations.

"Yes," said Molly, hugging the child, "he'll be handsome as his fa——." She stopped abruptly as if she remembered

he had no father.

"What is his name?"

"Nurse calls him John; I allow her to, but he has a name of his own."

"A pretty name, I'm sure."

"Hush," said Molly, in soft fear looking round the room. "Whisper; come over to me."

He came and bent his ear over to her. Molly spoke into it. "He has no papa; my child is a bastard. If he died he would not go to Heaven. The Bible says so."

The young man drew back, flushing. It was like a poison pushed into his very brain; it was like a scourge across his brow; he got up to walk about, that strange sick sensation that had oppressed him since he came in becoming more acute. His sudden movement affected Molly.

"You are leaving me," she said sadly. The whole world has left me. It blames me, but it's not my fault that the child has no father; it is not my fault that he will have no place in

Heaven. Oh! it's frightful; my poor baby."

She clasped the infant tighter and tighter, then burst into heavy, uncontrollable sobbing. A fit wild and fearful came on; she always had one when the fearful fact, the black truth of the child's illegitimacy, crossed her brain. It had haunted her before her lunacy; it haunted her still with frightful aggravation of madness. Her eyes blazed, her bosom heaved, and the poor infant, hugged with the despair of madness, screamed in pain. Denny tried to soothe her, but she glowered on him and gnashed at him with her teeth. He tried to force the child from her, but her strength was severhuman, and yelling at him:

"You are the devil, you want my baby," she beat him off.

The fit spent itself and left her weak and done; she lay back in the chair in a semi-faint. Denny had now to take the baby from her strengthless arms. The child was screaming and terrified; he found himself with it in his arms. Little John was a good baby, and being free from that awful embrace, grew quiet and looked with his big glossy eyes up at

the stranger holding him.

Denny looked at the child: a strange sensation came over him, new, pulsating, queer. His own child, yes, his own. He saw Madalina, but he saw his own eyes, the eyes of his people. A softness, a tingle set up in his bosom, and with a hasty movement he kissed the infant passionately. At this moment Nurse entered, but she drew back reverently, and he never knew that she had seen. Molly was too ill to sit at table. Nurse had to put her to bed, and the young soldier returned to his quarters with a heavy heart.

### CHAPTER XII.

THE brothers had an angry meeting, a sort of dislike had sprung up in the hearts of each; they put it aside, they ignored it, but the cancer seed was there. Denny had loved and revered and honoured his elder good brother, but on that day that he turned him on the steps of St. Anne's Church the strange evil had taken shape. The young lieutenant knew his tenderest and dearest sentiments were wounded, that life was robbed of its sweetest thing; that he himself was stripped and naked in the eyes of every honest thought. He was shamed and humbled, if not in public at least before his own soul. He blamed his brother, he blamed the Church his brother represented, and, bitterer than all, he blamed himself and the cursed training that made him what he was.

Victor, on his part, had always loved and idolized his young brother. Not for his escapade with this girl Bennett, not for his gambling, not for any wild oats that he had sown had the secret black seed sprang in his soul, but for those rash words, for those damned, daring, uncalled-for attacks on the Church of their fathers. He felt that he could forgive anything but an insult to his Church; it rankled in his mind dark and deep. A few things in the world were sacred; the Church

was the first and greatest in his estimation.

The meeting was a stormy one. Denny was angry that he had not been told of Madalina's illness; he became quite furious when the Asylum was proposed. He would not hear of it, and in the end his brother threw the clues out of his hand and told him he could do his own dirty work in future. In point of fact, Victor Deloney hated such a task; it was repugnant to his clean white hands; and now that his brother had been sheered off marrying, and, seeing that the girl was an imbecile, there was little fear of the intimacy being renewed, he could retire with safety. Besides, he was a student and a literary man, and required his mind absolutely for his work. He contemplated a

stupendous undertaking — a treatise on the Frailties of the Race. It was a great theme, and would require his complete engrossment; he looked forward to it with delight. So it was understood between the brothers that interference in this affair was at an end. Victor was very glad, and Denny, too, was very glad. The first thing the latter did was to move the Brown household out of the city to a handsome little villa out along the Antrim Road. It was a small house, only two stories high, with clematis climbing up the porch and round the windows. In the garden were roses and pansies and cowslips, and a little rustic summer house, embraced by a beautiful lilac tree. Behind the house was the sea, before it the big uplifting hills spread with yellow whins and purple heather in gorgeous anomalous Irish fashion. On either side was the country, green and glorious, the potato plums, the barley banks, the flax flowers, the corn roses waving in the Irish summer air. The air is keen and pure up here; had Molly had weak lungs it might have been too strong, but her lungs were the best, and this strong cold breeze that whistled over the Cave Hill was sister to the old wind that blew about the mud cabin far up Shankhill. It was life for Molly; she was sensible now on most subjects, only her own life was dim, mixed-up, confused. The infant, from being a toy, had developed into a mystery. How had she come by it? How? And her eyes would question the good woman who waited on her. She was much improved every way; her colour was back, and her flesh full and firm. She lived almost in the garden. The doctor had said the open air was her best tonic. Denny was a regular visitor: his visits were the only break in her monotony. She had lost her dread of him and knew him, and often stood by the gate watching for his coming. He saw her improving and prayed—if his intense innermost wish can be called prayer that her mind would come back.

It was frightful to see this young beautiful woman in such a condition. He did everything that man could devise for her comfort. No suggestion of the doctor was missed, anything that he could imagine himself he brought. All that a repentant man could do to undo his fault was done, but as yet there seemed "no place of repentance," although he sought it carefully. Knowing her love for music, he had a piano sent out, but the poor girl could not use it, and was

half-startled at the sounds her fingers made when she touched it. But Denny played and sang to her, and she would sit listening with a dim surprise upon her face, and wonder why she could not play. One evening while he was at the piano she asked him:

"Why can't I play?"

"You can sing, my dear. Come and sing with me."

"Why have I forgotten," she persisted. "I remember nothing but that little verse of the hymn."

He brought her over to the piano and sat down himself to

play the accompaniment.

"Now, Madalina, we sing beautifully together. Are you ready?" and he struck the opening chords of what happened to be before him. It was "Happy Moments."

She knew the music, and interrupted him.

"They sang that in the house—I mean where the women in evening dress were—you remember the girl, the gipsy girl

with the brown eves and black hair?"

Denny flushed purple; that girl had been his before herself, and turning, searched her face critically. Were her senses back? Had they returned so gradually and softly that the precise moment was indeterminable? She was standing at his side, gentle, shy, her shiny curls hanging loosely round her fair face, and her fine hands crossed lightly. He could not make her out, and he began to play again. Almost unconsciously Molly sang with him:

"In happy moments day by day, The sands of life may pass. In swift but tranquil tide away, From time's unerring glass,"

As they proceeded he dropped out, and listened with his fine ear to her clear enunciation, to her beautiful voice so peculiarly pathetic under the circumstances. The singing filled the room and floated out through the open window into the warm summer dusk. One secret eavesdropper bit her lips rapidly, full of jealous envy. How dare she sing her song, how dare she! But the singing went on, in curious pathos that had an almost uncanny ring.

Nurse Brown, who was baking in the kitchen, stole to the room door with floury hands to listen. The singing struck her as extraordinarily sweet; she could not rightly tell why,

but the tears gathered on her eyelashes.

Denny's fingers lingered over the chords; he had thought little of the girl having a voice. Now as the timbre, as the unique quality rolled about him he trembled, it suddenly came home to him anew how much she had lost—talent, future, character, reason. Oh, Madalina! and his tongue thickened in his mouth; if he could only retrieve, only call back that dark day when he tailed her at the altar. Little John was lying in his cradle near the window worrying an india-rubber horse, supremely content, minding neither singing nor anything else, but suddenly he let a wild and piercing shriek—a face had thrust itself between the partings of the snowy curtains and frightened the child.

Molly stopped instantly; her eyes derted round the room wildly until they encountered the little cradle and the contorted aface of the child. She threw up her hands over her face as if in despair and fell upon the carpet. She had not seen the face between the curtains, but the quick piercing shriek, the picture of the cradle struck the dead note in her soul, had broken in upon the half nescience of her mind, she had found ther past in the baby's face; the terrific on weep laid her prostrate, almost killed her, inasmuch as they thought her

edead.

They bathed her temples and her hands and fanned ther cold white face, but Molly's soul was at the very gate of edeath. It was a terrible faint, the shock, the quick realisation of that little life and what it meant to her almost took her silife.

"Is-is-this death," gasped Denny, his face set and his

tlips blanched.

Nurse was silent; she was afraid to speak, but she bent sover the couch where they had laid her and breathed fervently:

"Sweet Jesus, on her soul have mercy."

Denny stood speechless, a numbness swept over his entire body, every muscle became rigid, he felt cold as ice, helpless, astruck as with an unseen hand. He could do nothing, he swas powerless before this potent power; then a desire rushed afresh and fierce and madlike through him to die beside her, to affing his cold body on the couch beside her and share her doom.

With a stifled cry he turned and fled into the garden. Had the been less disturbed he might have heard a quick, light foot-lifall, the sharp slap of the little gate, but he was overpowered and stunned, and neither heard nor saw. He ran round the

garden full of agony and distress, then he hurried back to the couch with its pale, cold burden. Nurse had put a crucifix on her hands and had gone out to call up her maid of all work. At such a crisis the instinct of all is to call somebody, to bring someone, as if they could do more than we ourselves. We feel like wanting somebody, something, in our great unspeakable helplessness. Molly gave a sigh and moved; Denny's breath came in gasps; gradually a tinge almost imperceptible, yet potent and visible, spread upon her features, the curious look of life that we recognise had come.

Her clammy hands stretched and her closed, quivering eyes undid. Those eyes fastened on him; she knew him as her gaze deepened, something gathered in them firm and strange. He quailed before that look; the glass of wine in his hand shook, he could barely hold it, he dared not offer it. Their whole past stood between them like a living, breathing, separating being. The horror of that moment, the conscious nakedness, the wreck and degradation that they both awoke to, no language can ever express. He read her charge in

her eves.

He cowered, he hung his once gay and saucy head, and the girl slaughtered him with her burning silence. Yes, he was guilty; guilt's sable shadow sat upon him. Molly put her hand across her brow.

"You are in your own house."

"Own house! What has happened? Did I hear a baby. She knew she had, but her eyes went round the room. Ha! there was the cradle, a mountain of muslin, and there the child eating again the india-rubber horse.

"Oh, my God!"

And she hid her face in her white clasped hands. Reason had returned, but it was a blighted realm over which she had come to reign.

# CHAPTER XIII.

WHEN Nurse returned to the room with the maid she "blist" herself. She had never seen anything like this, never; and in a low voice she muttered another prayer. The maid lifted the wine glass that Lieutenant Deloney had put down, and held it to Molly's quivering lips. It was an anxious quarter of an hour, but the good woman saw with feeings of relief and gladness the subtle, indescribable change. Her reason had come home, there was not a question about it.

"Where am I?" she asked.

"With me, dear; don't fret yourself. You are better now." "Ah! you are the kind person; you were with me in the church. Have I been very ill?"
"Yes, but it is all over. You will get strong in no time."

Molly held her hand firmly, her great eyes with a great question searched the nurse's face, her lips trembled to put that question.

Nurse told the maid to go and make a cup of tea quickly, and then drawing her hand away she wheeled the couch nearer

the window.

"There is more air here," she said kindly.

But Molly's eyes with their question were following her. "Nurse," she called softly, "come here," and then her eyes went round the room in search of Lieutenant Deloney, but he had slipped away when the domestics entered.

"What, dearest? Don't vex yourself about anything."

"Tell me," said Molly, then stopped; "tell me truly as before God." She paused in pain, she hated to say it; she knew the answer, yet some voice, some half hope far down in her urged her on.

"Am I," she went on, her lips getting bloodless and her eyes

falling, "a mother before I am a wife?"

Nurse was silent; she stroked her hand kindly, then laid her big motherly arm round her shoulders and kissed her. Molly's half-shapen quivering hope was dead for ever, but she had

known before, something that never tells lies, had revealed it to her poor half-hoping heart. The doom was on her and the stain. She lay on the couch silent, her fallen eyes seeing not the sunny garden, the brilliant sky, the lofty hill-range, the closing sunflowers and shutting rose petals, but gazing in stunned silence at her own black doom.

The next few weeks were nursing ones, but Molly was mending rapidly, she was still weak, but almost well. One evening she was having her tea when Lieutenant Deloney came in.

He asked for some. Nurse rang for another cup, and with a wistful look at her patient withdrew. Denny sat down at the little table. He was calm and hopeful, he wanted to be agreeable, to plead for forgiveness, to renew the vows that he had made, to assure her that he too had suffered; but yet their love, their lives, might be re-united. He had no other intention, no other hope, than now, that she had recovered to make her his wife.

"You are better," he said kindly; "can I assist you?" And he drew nearer to the little couch she lay upon, and took her

cup of tea into his own hand.

Molly was silent; she knew his polite ways; they did not mean anything, they could never influence her now, they were part of the man—the man she hated, for she hated him with a fury and fierceness that surpassed her wildest exaltation of love. She herself was unaware of the strength of her hate. It was a new force in her nature, for she had never hated anyone.

"Hell hath no fury, Like love to hatred turned."

She could never think of him as anything but her betrayer, the deceiver, the abominable wretch who decoyed her to the very altar and left her there, a public example and a dupe.

Presently the pretence of tea was over, and he asked her if she were strong enough to go into the garden, perhaps the walk might do her good. She struggled to her feet, and, feeling dizzy, took his arm for support. She would have refused to walk with him in the garden, only she wished to speak very plainly to him, and the sooner the better, and the garden might be more private than the small sitting-room.

It was a beautiful warm evening, one of those exquisite Irish summer evenings, when day seems never away, only softened, only veiled with starry dusk. They went slowly through the flower beds, and on to the little summer-house. A blackbird was carrolling up among the lilac blossom, and the atmosphere

was full of sweetness and beauty.

They were silent these two. He wanted to speak; she wanted to speak, but the tongue of either seemed glued to their mouth. She was determined to let him break the ground first. They sat down on the bench that ran right round the little summer house. It was dark and dim in the little house, and a bunch of mignonette gathered into a vase on the little table in the centre filled the pale darkness with its heavy perfume.

Denny tried to lift her hand, but she held it from him

"Madalina, can you forgive me?" Le said at last.

"I will be candid with you," she recurred, bluntly "I cannot."

They were viewing each other in the light of other days. He thought of her only as he knew her, and as he loved her, and she thought of him only as a deceiver and a heartless wretch. Never for a moment did she deem that anything in the past was sincere; every promise, every ever look, every fond caress were poisoned in her memory. They were simply so many arts to gain his own ends. Every word he might speak now would be seen through that horrible idea; she could rever believe him.

"Dearest." he began, "I can never forgive myself. You have suffered, and so have I; but yet we are both young. Happiness is before us. We will go hand and ——"

"Mr. Deloney," she said coldly, "there is no use talking so;

you and I can never be aught but strangers."

"But, Madalina, you are mine, and I am yours. Before

God, as I am a man, I will do right by you."

She smiled scornfully. The terrible scene in the church, the awful sensation of it rose about her heart, and her face set and her lips closed in sharp curves. He guessed she was thinking of it.

"I would like to explain," he said rapidly. "My brother met me on the church step and stopped me. I was in debt,

"I do not care to know," she interrupted in the same tone. "The fact that you were not there explains enough. Understand that I cannot and will not see you again."

"Madalina, I know it was too bad, but I swear to you this

night that I will retrieve all."

"Retrieve! Impossible! The past can never be undone. I have ceased to care for you; I would not marry you if you could give me a coronet. You to me are less than the very meanest wretch in the whole city." One of those queer irregular flashes brought up to her memory Crawford's remark, "the rough and ready Shankhill boys." She stopped, overcome with emotion. This was her first recollection of Crawford; her lips trembled and her hands shook. She looked help-less and unnerved toward the little door.

"Madalina," he said slowly, "you must be reasonable;

you are all to me, I am all to you.'

"Do not deceive yourself, you are nothing to me."

He looked at her shiny curls, her glowing eyes, her gleaming teeth. Yes, she was beautiful, but he seemed to see her in a new light; she was clever, really clever. She was acting now, and so well that he must admire it, although it was at his own expense.

"Have you no mercy," he said aloud.

"Mercy! not now. Once I had so much that I prayed God to forgive me as I forgave you—your dastardly crime. My love for you was so great that it half excused you for doing as you did, but now," she went on with infinite scorn, "Now," she lifted up her shapely hand, and shook her

fingers as if shaking off dirty water.

He approached nearer to her, a sense of longing to hold her in his arms, to feel her against his breast came upon him. He only half-heard her burning words. They did not influence him except that they slightly irritated him, but in the deeper, stronger impulse the irritation was forgotten. He loved fearfully, desperately. It seemed as if he never loved her half so much as this evening in the semi-dusk of the summer evening, as he realised she had come back to life and sense, and that she was his own again.

"Madalina, I thought you dead that evening; my heart almost broke. If anything happened to you I could not live. Every day since your illness has been a penance; now that you are better the burden has fallen off me. I will be Denny again, and you will be Madalina, my love—my wife, for you

are my wife in very truth."

"Denny Deloney, your words are gross in my ears. I am

a poor girl, a mill girl, a Shankhill girl," and she drew herself up as if proud of what once she blushed to own. "But I am not made of metal of that kind, you and I have broken for time and eternity."

"We cannot break, there is the living link between us."

She coloured scarlet; the dusky light hid the anger in her eyes. She was furious, and felt that he had waved his trump card in her face like a mean cowardly scoundrel.

"That child is not a uniting but a dividing link, the blasted proof of your deceit; the nameless cross that I must carry as

punishment for giving way to your false sweetness."

"I will acknowledge the child before the world."

She smiled in unbelief; she had heard that story before. "We need not prolong this interview, it is painful to me. I

think you understand, Mr. Deloney, my meaning."

"Madalina, it is idle to talk like this; you have nobody but me, what would you do without ——?"

"You forget I am a spinner. I can still earn my daily bread," and she looked into his eyes as if she said, "I am a princess. Besides, I will go at once to my father."
"Your father," he repeated, with knitted brows, recalling

something he heard some time ago. "Your father is

She gave a gasp. "Dead! my father dead," and a huskiness gathered in her throat. Her flashing eyes grew glazed, and her troubled heart fluttered. Dead! stiff and cold, sightless, heartless, her father; her poor father who was so proud of her. No chance of begging his pardon, no hope of a shelter under his roof, and worse than all he had died believing everything bad of her. He could never know that Deloney poisoned her mind, and made her stay with him. A prayer rose up within her, strong, intense and fearful in its insistence, that God would let Phil know the truth in that other world; know that she had never forgotten him, that she had turned in her great extremity toward him, that her heart had never wavered from him. She bowed her head and wept passionately. "Oh, my father, my father."

Denny came over to her. His action was only meant in kindness to soothe her; to beg her not to give way to such grief, but his approach maddened her He and he alone was guilty of her poor father's death. She looked at him, so handsome, so utterly unharmed, either in character or society or person by all that had ruined her and hers, that the stirring vengeance in her bosom leapt within her like a living thing.

"Do not come near me, do not touch me," she cried fiercely,

going toward the door.

"Madalina, be calm, do you understand me? In God's

name I offer you myself."

"In God's name I refuse. You are a curse before me, you are the devil in human form to me. I hate you with a hatred intense as hell."

She moved nearer to the door; he put his arm across it. Somehow he could not or would not believe her, but she had provoked him, and his dark eyes glowed like living coals in the little dusky summer-house.

They were now facing each other. He barred the doorway

with his tall military figure.

"I never wish to see you again," she said bitterly. "Allow

me to pass."

"But I wish to see you, and I will see you, and you will be mine in spite of man or devil or yourself. You are mine, my very own."

He caught her in his arms, he embraced her with that passion and fury so strong upon him. He kissed her lips and brow and hair in passionate triumph and love.

"Mine," he breathed, "mine."

She struggled in his arms, but it was no use. He held her in his superior strength. He gloried in making her feel helpless, in making her feel that she was as a feather in his hands, and that he could do as he liked with her, and that he would do it.

She fluttered wildly, full of rage and hate and powerlessness. "You have fascinated me," he said, in a tense whisper, "and I love it to be so."

At last he let her go; she was panting, excited, insulted,

almost mad again.

"You brute," she hissed, "you cowardly brute," and whipping up the vase of mignonette, she dashed it full in his face.

Someone without listening could not guess what made the crash like glass breaking.

They did not

They did not'sigh at parting,
They shed no bitter tears.
The tears and the ceaseless sorrow,
They followed in after years.''

# CHAPTER XIV.

THE vase cut him across the eyebrow to the bone; the water and mignonette made a sad show of his unimpeachable shirt-front and cravat, the blood began to ooze down his face. Molly passed him, with flashing eyes and heightened colour. She never remembered being so angry, and as she hastened up the path she said to herself: "You little know the girl you have to deal with. I am not the Molly you found me, but the one you've made me."

He did not go up to the house, but rubbed himself with his handkerchief, then going to the garden, pulled a leaf off one of the plants and held it to his brow. It bled considerably, but he waited until it had subsided somewhat; then, pulling his hat low on his brow and turning up his coat collar, he set out for his quarters. He was in a pickle, and he felt it; no man liked to feel nice and look nice better than Denny

Deloney.

He was angry, too, not so much at her having struck him as at her obstinacy, her cursed temper that spoiled their evening and made him savage with her. He was disappointed, vexed. hurt within his very soul; withal he did not take in one word of what she said, for with himself this love meant love right on; nothing could alter this something in his bosom, no matter what she did or how she acted, this strange clinging, this deep passion that warped and wove his being into hers would never leave him. He was conscious of this, and felt its force as he walked down the Antrim Road with bowed head and She would still be his, his Madalina. he had never felt so toward any woman; queer, he could not shake himself free as at other times. As he went on quickly a figure dogged behind him, a bright, plump, pretty figure that followed him foot for foot until he turned into the barrack-This same figure had traced him to the little villa, and now was following up the trail. As he passed in, she

for this was a woman-went straight up to the sentry and

asked him: "What do you call that gentleman?"

He pointed her to one of the soldiers loitering near. She scowled at him, for she was very tired, her feet were hot and blistered, but she meant business. The man she asked told her; he seemed about to question her, but she turned on

her heel and walked off.

She had met Lieutenant Deloney, or as he was to her, Mr. Smith, some eighteen months ago. He had been smitten by her pretty face, for she was a pretty dark-eved, red-cheeked girl with smooth soft olivaster skin and black glossy curls. She was tiny, childish in size, but full of life and vivacity, and never had a care in her life. Mr. Smith enjoyed her fine spirits, took her with him to the Maze Races and other places; then the thing got stale, the transitory impulse vanished. But not so with the Lady Winnie. As he drew off, her fiery little heart clung the closer. Later on Molly Bennett crossed his path, and the former intimacy ceased completely. Lady Winnie learned of this girl with the golden hair, and her rage and hatred and envy were terrible. When Deloney took Molly away from that notorious house and did not return himself, life became for her almost unendurable. Her misery was crushing; she had no education, no religion, nothing to support her but the craving, burning desire for her handsome softspoken lover. He had left her; she was lonely, desolate, heart-stricken. As time wore in she planned her escape: she had no money, and realizing that without it she could not get along, she filled her pockets with all the jewellery she could lay hands on and fled. Many desolate days followed wandering about seeking here and there, but at last she sighted him on the streets and traced him to the villa far out on the Antrim Road. She found out that her hated rival was here; she took lodgings in the vicinity, and presently it dawned on her that her beloved was not resident in this villa. that he came and went. She watched him enter the house many times, and saw Molly and he go down the garden arm-in-arm this evening. She listened, and heard almost all their conversation in the summer-house. How she envied Molly his love, his proposals, his kisses and embraces, and rejoiced deeply at her refusal. She had heard whispers that he was a soldier, but had scarcely believed it. A soldier in her mind always wore a red coat, but it was true, it seemed. As she left the depot she kept repeating and repeating the name, "Deloney, Deloney, Deloney." She went to her lodging very tired, but very thankful. Next day, dressed very carefully, she presented herself and inquired with her best

air for Lieutenant Deloney.

Denny had had a terrible night; latterly he had taken little or no spirits, but last night he was angry, disappointed, and, feeling that he had looked like a scarecrow coming down the road and going into his quarters, he had flown to drink; as the night advanced the cut on his brow throbbed and stung him, he could not sleep with pain, and ever his mind returned to the angry disappointing scene in the little summer-house. Once he fell asleep, and his dream was of Madalina—sweet, fresh, shy, chinging to him in her girlish eager way. He wakened with a start, and the delicious vision raded, leaving the tantalizing memory and the throbbing pain.

When morning came, the pain had become intolerable and his eye was almost closed. Much against his will he had to send for the surgeon. His eyebrow was deeply cut; as he

looked at himself he felt ready to curse.

The surgeon put two stitches in it, gave him a light sleeping draught, and ordered his valet to see that he was not disturbed. Denny was irritated. He dearly loved his bed, but once it was imposed upon him, he remembered a thousand things that had to be attended to this particular day. ever, the draught soon took effect, and he fell asleep, in the middle of which Lady Winnie made her way to his door. Lieutenant Deloney's man was a good-natured flustering Irish bhoy. There was only one thing special about him, his sincere good-heartedness towards his master. There was nobody to compare with the "Livetenant;" it's proud he was to be his "valley." Seeing the "docthor" had spoken to him he swelled with importance, and determined to fulfil orders to the very letter. He was tidying up, going noiselessly about the apartment, when the knock at the door broke in upon his thoughts. There was nothing unusual in a knock. for many callers and many messengers "tempt the sowl" out of him; but Mike was determined to keep off everything and every person to-day; the case was urgent.

When he opened the door, to his amazement he saw the "purtiest colleen evir wos," but Mike was never on too good terms with his master's lady friends; besides, one glance from

his experienced eye revealed the visitor's exact status. He became more determined to obey the doctor's orders.

"What do you want?" he inquired, before the lady had time

to speak.

"Is Lieutenant Delonev in?" "Wid ye're lave he's not." "When shall he be?"

"He'll be here whin he comes."

He clapped to the door, leaving the lady, somewhat taken back, standing on the landing.

"That's the impident hussy acomin' here alucking after the

Livetenant, and he abed with his head in fevour."

The lady stood without bursting with rage, but she had her mind made up to see Lieutenant Deloney. She took up her position as guard outside the door, determined not to flinch until he either came out or went in. She had no modesty, and felt no annoyance at the sly glances of the officers and servants who passed and repassed as the day advanced. She had been standing some hours, and feeling tired she sat down on the first step of the stairway.

Mike applied his eye to the keyhole now the lady was on a level with it, and saw the pale grey flicker. She was passionate and in a rage with this ill-mannered fellow. With a quick motion she raised her tiny parasol, thrust the fine ivory pointed ferrule through the keyhole straight into his eye.

"Tare and ages," he screamed, "Ye're the divil hisself." Denny, sleeping in the next apartment, was awakened by the strong deep voice of his servant. He was much better and felt refreshed, and wondered what had made Mike yell like that. He touched the finger-bell lightly and Mike's goodnatured face appeared, his hand over his eye.

"What's the matter, Mike?"

"She's pinked me, ye're honor, straight as a bolet. clane out, ye're honor, and smarting like blazes."

"She?" queried his master, sitting up on his elbow.
"The girl as was asking fur ye' but I didn't let her in, I jest kept the door shut."

"Do you know her?" said Denny, sitting up in bed now

thoroughly aroused.

"She's a stranger, the purtiest girl ivir knocked the door." His master wondered could it be Madalina. He thought not, but the idea disturbed him.

"Mike, I hope you have not been rude."

"Not at all, not at all; I jest said ye weren't at home. sir, look at it, she ran a wee white point through the keyhole straight into me eye."

"Mike, were you?" and Denny laughed heartily, he thought the fellow well served. "What is she like?" he went

"Well, she's black-a-viced with long gould rings in her ears, she's foine and gran in silk and lace"

Lieutenant Deloney could not imagine who his visitor could be; he got up in spite of Mike's remonstrances. As he looked at himself in the mirror that horrid feeling almost akin to anger glowed in him. If he received this visitor, he could not hide his brow, but his curiosity was aroused, and he was anxious to know who was there and to get her off the stairway. As he proceeded with his toilet the frightful headache of the evening before returned, but he ordered his man to go out and bring the lady in. Mike went unto the landing, the lady turned her head sharply.

"Miss," said he, sotto voce, "behave courself, and no running white things into buddies oieves. Walk in if ye plaze," he added aloud, throwing open the door. Lady Winnie

looked daggers at him, and went forward quickly.

Lieutenant Deloney advanced to meet her and shook hands

cordially.

"This is unexpected, but none the less welcome, dear Lady Winnie," and he smiled into her up-raised sparkling eyes.

It was well over a year since they had met, and when the girl found herself really in his presence the love, the swelling passion surging so many months in her bosom lifted up in her like an incoming billow. The power of speech almost

left her as she gazed up into his face.

Lieutenant Deloney led her to a seat, and going over to his side-board poured her out a glass of sherry. She drank it greedily; it was new life to her fainting, weary-waiting heart. Denny opened his cigarette case and presented it. thanked him, but declined, her glowing eyes still fastened on his face. He felt those eyes like a physical blow upon his cut brow, and the girl, looking intently, wondered was there any connexion between it and the crashing glass last night in the summer-house.

"What has happened to your brow?" she asked pointedly.

"Oh, an accident, I hope you are quite well."

"I am quite well, but you have not been over anxious," she said in soft reproach.

"I have been very busy. My duties have been pressing

of late"

She had no conception to what he referred by "duties," but whatever disagreeable affair it was, it had not kept him from that yellow-haired one.

"You have been with her," she said pointedly.

"Now, now Lady Winnie, now, now,"he said deprecatingly.

"I have left — for ever." "Indeed," and his eyes fell.

"It was horrible when you did not come." "There were others more agreeable than I."

"I would rather have you."

"Lady Winnie, such a remark is very silly." There was a deep pause.

"Do you want anything," he asked gently, knowing he was going to wound her, but it could not be avoided.

"Yes, I want money and I want you," and her eyes clung to him.

"Money is very scarce," he returned, not noticing the other remark.

She got up and came over to him.

"I have no place to go. I would like to live with you." "You cannot live with me, Lady Winnie," he said gently. "Do you not care, then?"

"No," he answered, truthfully, keeping his eyes down.

The tears dropped down her cheeks, her red lips trembled, her hoping heart was rent. The very ground seemed leaving her, her last plank had given way.

"What am I to do? Where am I to go. I'm nobody. I can't play the piano or talk French. I'm no one."

"Never mind, Lady Winnie, never mind, there are many

things you can do. What would you like to do?"

She lifted her hands over her tear-wet face in choking grief; there was only one thing she felt willing and able to do.
"Let me be your servant," she said entreatingly,

ask nothing, only let me be near you; do not send me away."

He looked away from her streaming eyes. It annoved him to see anyone in tears. He was debating with himself what would be the surest and easiest way to get rid of her. He wished to take the least painful path, but did not see it

clearly.

"Lady Winnie," he said with firmness, "You cannot be my servant; you must go away, you must not come again. I will try and be a friend to you for once."

She looked at him eagerly, misconstruing in her excitement

his meaning. "And live with you?"
"No, no," he said gently.

Her countenance fell. She was one of those who either love or hate, flush with a wilder, fiercer nature than the Irish. If to be friend meant banishment from him, she wanted none of it: she would have none of it.

"I cannot be your friend. Let her—that girl you made

He went pale to the lips, every nerve in him seemed to How had she known this? How dare she come and tell him this to his teeth.

He rose at once, and going over to the mantel to hide his

confusion and anger, lit another cigarette.

"Lady Winnie, hush, no personalities. I warn you against ever coming here again."

The girl was struggling with disappointment and grief and

her wounded love. She held out her hands to him.

"Take me," she said passionately, "only take me. That other girl hates you; nothing will ever make her love you as little Winnie does. I'm only a little gipsy, but I would die for you. Give me your hand, say the sweet words you said when first we met."

"Lady Winnie, I'm sorry, it is impossible, here are a few

pounds; you must not come here again."

He offered her some money; she stood looking at him like

a wounded creature at bay, helpless, at his mercy.

"Take this," he said, wishing the interview finished, "and go." His hand was over the bell waiting to ring for his man to show her out.

"I have nothing," she said, her dark eyes flashing, "but I would be poorer if I touched it," and staggered towards the

door without another look.

This great personal appeal on which she counted so much had failed; there was nothing now but the great, big, empty world. As she staggered past Mike she did not see him nor the officers and men whom she flashed past in her

desperate retreat. Mike watched her leaving, and he made an accurate guess that the visit had not been a success; somehow his heart softened. "Poor thing," he murmured, in a big-hearted Irish way, utterly forgetting his watering eye.

Lady Winnie was wounded to the quick, so much so that every burning word died on her lips. Her jealousy, her horrible sense of being turned off, choked her, and "all for her—her, who refused him, who said such bitter words last

night.

Lieutenant Deloney was irritated at this visit; he felt insulted, furious, about that reference to Madalina, and that scene of the previous night. How she had come to know it he could not surmise; during the whole interview he was consumed with only one idea to be rid of her, to get her away. He had tried to do it gently, but there are some things can never be done gently, and this was one of them. He had been brutal; the memory vexed him, but what else could he do, and he resolved to blot out of his memory the girl's tears. He was shockingly ill; the fearful headache had been going on during the entire interview, and now he felt as if his skull would split.

To bed he had to go in spite of engagements, duties and everything. His sick eyes turned upon his letters, but with a hopeless gesture he went on toward his bedroom. Never had he such a sensation of illness; he could barely see, and

entirely done up, he was glad to find himself in bed.

The young lieutenant became rapidly worse; as evening approached his temperature rose higher and higher. The doctor was hastily summoned. One glance was enough for him, and the young soldier, feeling that some serious trouble was upon him, asked to be taken home instead of to the hospital. He shared, although scarcely knowing it, that deep reverence that is almost sacred, common to Irish people for home; in great moments this trait is very visible. His wishes were regarded, the doctor going himself to Deloney Hall to see that the preparations were carried out under his personal supervision.

There was no little flutter in Deloney Hall when the news was received. His father privately and firmly believed that this was a judgment on him for his attacks upon the Church. The fever developed rapidly, ere many hours he was raving wildly, one name always on his lips, one vision always before

his tortured brain. Madalina. Curious this vision of her always came as he had first seen her, a simple girl of the Shankhill Road, full of modesty and turning pink under his ardent gaze. Now he saw her in the white muslin frock, again hiding her face under a shawl while the beautiful summer moon-light framed her in a silver shadow; then that moon-light would intensify into a glorious density, and Madalina was enveloped, hidden from him; the light seemed to swallow her up, to catch her to itself and leave him standing alone. He would sink back on the pillow exhausted, disappointed, crying out, calling her in the high excited tones of delirium. Then the scene would begin again and go on to the same ending, with the light closing not off from him.

It was a terrible time, his eyebrow would not heal, it was suppurating, and the doctors determined to undo the stitches, for evidently something was wrong. After a critical examination they found a tiny seed of mignonette that had set up this terrible inflammation. This operation reduced every inch of resistance in his system, and as the fever preyed upon him the doctors looked grave and held out very little

hope to his weeping mother and aged father.

Every voice, every footfall in the house hushed, the servants went about with scared faces, silently listening for the awful moment. The crisis had arrived, the whole house had the oppression of death, almost all were weeping, for Master Denny was beloved by every domestic in the establishment.

Dinner was served, but old Mr. Deloney was on his knees in prayer and the priest read the rosary for the dying, and his mother was wringing her hands in tearless agony over the suffering form of her dying son. Nobody minded anything, every thought was centred in the silent room where the young

soldier was closing in the battle with death.

So the day passed on, the suspense eating into every hour, the shadow brooding, heavy, deep, and dark. All that human aid could do was done, the highest science, the best skill, the best care had spilled their richest incense in his cause, but higher, more precious than all was that mother love that clung and clung and clung to her boy, holding him back, as it were, at the very portal of gloom with white spirit fingers that no eyes saw or felt, but the suffering one. Those fingers won, they held on when others let go, and that half-gone spirit

was obedient to the thrilling beautiful demands of calling love. His mother's face, full of expectancy, despair, hope, and anxious love was the first thing that met his eyes when they opened consciously. Her feelings were painted on every feature, in her glowing eyes, on her trembling lips, her son saw it, his lips moved, she hastened to bend further over him, his poor weak voice whispered:

"Mother."

Her aching heart had its reward, he lifted his weak arm round her neck, drew her face down to his and held her in a mute but eloquent embrace. Love had won; how often it wins in great family crises, no mathematician may reckon. The days of convalescence were long and slow. During this wearying time a flutter of exciting news flew through the barracks; changes were imminent, and the regiment was ordered to be held in readiness for foreign service. Lieutenant Deloney was kept in ignorance of this, his doctors, prompted, of course, by his father, who hated the Army, decided he was not strong enough to hear anything disturbing or exciting. His father decided this would be an auspicious opportunity to get his son to give up the Service, and he hoped devotedly that his regiment would be gone before Denny would know anything about it, and then he might be persuaded to sell out. But orders like this sometimes move slowly in military circles, and the young lieutenant was steadily creeping to health. He was greatly shook, a perfect skeleton; his big black eyes looked ghostly in his white face, and the little red mark across his eyebrow stood out clearly and distinctly; it was healed, but the scar, red as a little flame, would go to the grave with him.

His mind turned again and again to Madalina. He longed intensely to hear of her, but he was too weak to undertake a visit; presently, he told himself, presently. As he waited and longed and thought and dared not to speak her name, the old passion rose in him keen and strong. He had enjoyed running in and out to the little villa; and then the baby, he was a new amusement, and feeling somewhat foolish he inwardly admitted he enjoyed the baby too. The anger that he had felt toward her died out, he knew it was not her blow had brought on the fever, although doubtless it precipitated matters, but the tension and strain of the preceding months. Would she be glad to see him, glad he had not died, glad to

have him come to her, glad that still they were spared to each other? The sickness seemed to have changed him, a deeper clearer vision of life had opened before him. realised things better. His mother's love stood before him as it had never stood, that tender, deep, unchangeable, unqualified affection in its brilliant unsulliable beauty looked to him as the reflex of the Highest Himself, and his father and brother and everybody showed in softer lines. The other side of the picture became the more blurred and dark, he wished with intensity unto prayer to turn from all the past, the spoiled past with its sin and carelessness, its do-as-I-like and never-mind; its frivolity, its froth and rotten gloss he resolved to fling off for ever. Madalina! Every nerve crept when he remembered his conduct to her, he loathed himself, he hated himself for it, and the memory of the child's illegitimacy was as a whip lash on his quivering flesh. There was no excuse for it, none, but the madness, the unguided madness of his great passion for this woman. He loved her with a great love, this sickness cleansed and purified and ennobled it. but nothing under heaven could hift it from his bosom. No matter what came or went he would keep that for ever, but he would expunge in his own eves and in the world's eyes all that had gone before. Already in the eyes of God she was his wife.

While he was longing for strength to carry out his resolution the orders were received from Headquarters that the whole Belfast Brigade was to leave for India in one month. The colonel notified him, and in the afternoon his captain called. The young lieutenant was thoroughly delighted. To him it looked like an act of Providence; some great spirit answering his, in its effort to break from the old life with

all its associations and companions.

A great panorama of happiness spread before him, he would marry and take his wife with him, and before his service abroad was over any family bitterness that might arise would have cooled and passed away. His gladness and high hope did more for his convalescence than any doctor, it was so pleasant to remember that out in India the social world was practically an official one. His wife would be received for his sake, but how much they would live alone, and how delightful it would be in the strange country, all in all to one another, and he would do his best, his daring Irish gallant

best to distinguish himself, to rise in the Service and be an honour to his regiment and to his country. Never once did he dream of quitting the army, but when his father approached him on the subject and urged the state of his health, his mother's wishes, his own wishes, it made it hard; but somehow Denny had become a soldier to the very core of his heart, it was his life-work, it thrilled and charmed and enlarged him, he felt he could not give it up; he would live, and he

hoped to die a soldier, and an Irish brave.

Before he was really fit, he hastened back to his quarters, glad to see the men and mingle with his brother officers and feel in his own place again. Time was running on, he had many arrangements to make and a great many affairs to settle up, he had not yet got out to Madalina, but every thought was there, every arrangement that was made was straightening out the path to her, he wished to be utterly unhampered, free from every little worrying detail when he went to her with his heart in his hand. Light, airy buoyancy filled him, a sensation of joy that he had not experienced for many years pulsated through his whole being. He was conscious of doing right, and had that fine sweet uplifting pleasure that is a phase of spirituality, beautiful and unapproachable by any other avenue. The whole world was more beautiful, and God not so remote. Now the way was clear; everything was prepared; now for her, his beautiful, his only love, and a smile deep and radiant lay in his gleaming eyes as he anticipated that meeting and thought of their happy time far away in old, old Hindustan.

# CHAPTER XV.

DURING this time Molly was living in misery; the galling sense of eating Deloney's bread haunted every hour; the fear, the horrible fear, that he would force her had never left her since that evening in the summer house. She longed to get away, far, far away from him, where his very thoughts could not follow her. But where? How? No father, no home, no money, no character, no friend; for she dore not think of Sir Percy Lyle; verily she was stripped before the wide world,

before herself, before her God.

Sometimes she yearned for Crawford, to see him looking at her with the love he never could express lurking in his eyes. He would help her, he would show her what to do. Then the folly of such an idea would appear, and she was glad; yea, thankful that the wide seas rolled between them. The whole world might see her disgrace, but he must not He must keep his image of her unspoiled within his bosom. What would she do? Where would she go? What was to become of the child, the pretty dimpling darling who held out his fat little arms to her, who clutched her finger so tightly and crowed in her face—and yet whom she could not altogether love, because little John had become in her eyes the Symbol of her betrayal, the proof of her bitter position.

She was quite healthy now, but intensely pale, and seemingly more tall, more graceful than ever, a beautiful girl with perfect features and a marvellous complexion; but it was a changed face; the old kindling expression, the quick blush, the drooping eyelids, the soft, shy, sweet atmosphere that surrounds a young maiden had disappeared. She was still young in time, but youth seemed gone. She had suffered more before she was twenty than most women do during their whole life. Not "midway," but in the first glad charm of starting life she found herself "Within a forest dark, for the

straightforward pathway had been lost."

But this life could not go on. She could not spend her days here for ever. The nothing-to-do-ness was killing, the opportunity to brood might prove fatal to a person so imaginative,

she wanted occupation, work, to sweep away the past. When her eyes fell upon the sea, it put her almost crazy; those ships steaming up the Lough, what had they brought? How many letters had come home for her? She dare not think; and the mountains at the door-cheek seemed to silhouette her old free childhood up Ballygomartin, Forth River and Glencairn; she could not free herself from those by-gone times, nor from the memory of Crawford. In spite of everything, her wretchedness, her broken spirit were driving her like a stormtossed ship into the enemy's harbour. Yet Crawford was not her enemy; she could think of him as nothing but her friend, her only friend on the face of the earth. What was she to do? Where would she go?—yet go she must. As the days slipped in her sinking heart felt the day coming very near. She dreaded it, yet her whole being cried out to it. While she pondered over her position it gradually dawned on her that Deloney's absence was more proctracted than usual. In the relax and quieting of her great excitement after their last meeting she had not noticed, neither had she missed him in these great soliloquising moments. Now she suddenly realised that he never came, and the idea flashed on her clearly and vividly like lightning that he had cast her off, and that presently the certain notification would reach her. This very silence was perhaps the notification. Why had she been so slow to read it? so dense as not to understand?

It was all that was needed to put her into fighting trim. She decided at once; she would go immediately. Another day would find her out of the house for ever. She made her proparations rapidly. First there was a little note of gratitude to Nurse Brown, commending her to God for the goodness and tenderness she had shown her, and reminding her of the great promise that not a cup of water would escape the Great Eye

of Him who rewardeth justly.

"I could not stay a moment longer, forgive me; nor could

I take you into my confidence."

She laid the letter under her pillow so that it might not be seen so speedily, and went to bed waiting for the morning. When the early dawn was spreading she was ready. The child slept in its cot in her room. She kept her eyes from the little bed, from the sleeping child. The last moment had come; a curious throbbing tore through her keener even than physical pain, but she walked steadily out of the room, down the stair-

way. Her feet felt weighted; she unbolted the front door, then those heavy feet could go no farther.

Half-angry, half-glad, she flew up the staircase, and

snatched the child from its cot.

"Oh, God, I can't leave it, I can't," she gasped. She put on the infant's clothing quickly, soothing its slumberous fret by conning that familiar favourite hymn-verse. She still sang that; it was the tune she thought made her always return to it, for the meaning of the words seemed to have passed away.

She took the child, slipped out of the house, down the garden, through the little gate, ou unto the white dry high-

road.

On, on, on like the wind, taking notice of nothing; only conscious of a wild indescribable freedom that intoxicated her, every painful thought, every poisoned memory, fell from her; she knew only one thing, all was behind. She had got rid of him for ever. She had come to a new epoch. Their separation was as quick, as decisive as their union had been. Her nostrils dilated, her breath came deep, from her very soul rose up the cry "Thank God." She saw nothing, until, with distended nostrils and flushed cheek, the dark, massive, magnificent gates of Fortwilliam Park met her excited gaze.

Memories rushed fresh and full upon her of that Sunday night, when in the warm blue dusk of summer those beautiful gates had seemed to her dreamy eyes the portals into enchanted lands. She remembered the car flying through, remembered her lover's voice in her ear, remembered her glowing love. How terribly false it had all been; God, how she had loved him. From where she stood now it was marvellous how she

could so have loved and trusted any human soul.

How far off was that night with its glorious hopes, its throbbing anticipations of happiness. The great mystery of love like a radiant cloud enveloping her; all had passed away, the stern reality was here, and she glanced at the sleeping infant on her bosom. The child semed to feel her gaze. He opened his big glossy eyes, so like his father's upon her, and Molly shivered. The sense of shame always struck like a physical blow when she looked at the child. She could not get used to him, the feeling always came to wound her afresh. What is pain, what is suffering, what is death itself in comparison with the unspeakable irremediable agony of a husbandless mother?

### CHAPTER XVI.

NURSE began her duties for the day. Her patient had no special breakfast hour. In the first days the doctor had said let her sleep as much as possible, so Molly came down whenever she liked, sometimes earlier, sometimes later; but now that baby was getting such a size she came somewhat more regularly and earlier. However, it was nothing unusual for her to be late. So nurse took no notice when ten o'clock passed and she had not appeared. It approached eleven o'clock, baby's arrowroot was ready; she began to think the child was sleeping very long. She listened at the stair-foot-not a sound; she went up the staircase slowly, and as she approached the bedroom she noticed the door stood open. The good woman paused and "blist" herself as she always did in supreme moments. A fear struck her to the soul, her limbs shook, every trace of colour left her face. She went into the room trembling.

The cradle empty. The girl fled.

She stood staggered, speechless, her teeth chattering: Her first clear thought was that the girl's madness had returned—she had noticed her sitting in the chair for hours gazing at the sky; no matter how she had tried to rally her it was no use. God alone knew what might happen, what she would

do both on herself and the poor defenceless infant.

After the first shock, the woman ran downstairs, and got on her bonnet and things. She was going straight to Master Denny, as she always styled him. Would he blame her? Would he imagine she had not been vigilant enough? In any case he must know immediately; such an idea had never entered her head that the girl would run away. She made her way in the early forenoon to the barrack vard, and passed right on to Lieutenant Deloney's quarters. She prayed that he might be here, for her innermost soul shrank at the notion of going to Deloney Hall on such a mission. She was only half-expectant, but luck was with her; Lieutenant Deloney

was up and dressed. He looked pale and ill, and that nasty red mark on his brow was noticeable and vivid on his white skin. The moment Nurse Brown was announced he deemed something was wrong, either with Madalina or the baby. When he looked at the woman's scared countenance he knew it must be out of the common: how much out of the common it was did not dawn upon his bewildered mind:

"What is wrong?" he asked pointedly, before she had

time to speak.

"She has run away," Nurse returned bluntly, " and taken the child with her."

He gazed at her transfixed, and the next consciousness that he had was the same as the nurse's—her madness had returned.

Apprehension like an ague shook him from head to foot. The terror of the thing gripped him, words paled before the horror of his fear. The girl he loved, this child whom he also loved, at the mercy of compassionless madness. Oh God, what was this that had come into his life, into his very breast.

A blindness slowly crept over him, every v hope, every fine delightful throb in him turned chill and cold. The future he had reached to, withered in one swift all-blasting moment; the radiance, the pleasure, the sweetness his soul had fed on these last few weeks turned into gall and wormwood; that queer vision of his fevered brain came up. He saw her swallowed up as it were before his very eyes-Madalina-the child—his happiness, his very desire of life fading. Gone! really gone! Madalina? No, impossible. No; but yet what meant that strange chill in his soul? He tried to rally himself before his old nurse, but with a frightful sense of the man within him being wounded he sank into a chair, and covered his face with his hands. The blankness, the horror, the quick, fearful realisation of rupture in their relationship, the certainty that the union he had hoped for was done away, came home to him with the grim unflinching intensity of truth. He had in that first fearful shock a vivid presentiment of the actual fact that all was over between them, that the past was dead—dead, without the hope of resurrection. A chasm, yea, a very grave, yawned at his feet; in it lay his living love with its high-coloured hopes, its burning vehemence, its sin, its truth, its passion, its glorious dreams of life and happiness. As he looked the living thing stretched

hands up to him as if to draw him down. In that terrible moment he longed to go—to go down to his love in that gaping, unclosed tomb.

When his voice came to him he murmured brokenly, uncon-

sciously using those old, old words:

"Madalina, Madalina, what is this that thou hast done?"

When the great first moment crept into the second, the mist surrounded him fuller and fuller; one thing stood definitely in his mind, the nearness of the departing day, the sense that there was no time to do anything, the very eve of departure

was upon him.

What under Heaven was he to do? The awfulness of the situation was indescribable. Already she might be lying dead -and the child-his child, might be done to its death. He thought of the police, of private detectives; up before his eves loomed the publicity, the unravelling to the world, the mystery, the secret of their loves; the story would be out, the scandal would be gossiped, the brutal public would point its finger at them both. There could be no secrecy now, none under Heaven; no matter how he looked at it, their whole past seemed unbared to every vulgar eve; nevertheless she must be traced, she must be found, cost what it might. Publicity, scandal, all must be braved to find her, to bring her back. There was not one moment to lose. He rose and began to pace the room, asking every detail, trying to surmise the time she had gone, the number of hours she had got the start, wondering where she would head to in the dim hours of the early morning.

Before many minutes passed that wild venture began, that great search with bated breath, that half-expected to find two dead cold corpses rather than a young living woman with her dimpled baby. Private detectives were let loose through the city, and flew up and down the different leading roads, the railway stations were watched, but mid-day passed and the search was fruitless. She was not found either dead or alive. He was grappling with fate, but he was too late, the initiative had left his hand for ever; the place of repentance that he sought could never be found; he was too late. Although he set everything in motion that money or love could devise, some voice deep in his soul whispered those awful words, "Too late": Too late, and over him dropped a darkness

thick as night,

## CHAPTER XVII.

MOLLY sped on into the city; it was very early morning, the mechanics and workers in mills and factories and founderies and ship-yards were hurrying though the streets, a great throng of men, women, boys and girls, the numerous horns of these big work-places were screeching the great human torrent gushed quicker and quicker, the scurrying feet lifting and falling like the break of a tidal wave. Now and again a laugh broke out, and a bright head was tossed as the laughter hurried by, but most pushed on its silence, eager to be "in" in time. Numerous were the glances cast on Molly; her expensive dress, her youth, her beauty, the child with his costly clothing lying on her breast, were out of itness to that untimely hour of the morning.

A few of the coarser, more vulgar ones, jested at her and pulled her skirt as they flew by. The girl's very soul shrank within her; she understood only too well what they took her for, and the agony in her heart increased at the swift and awful realisation that they were right. The man in the street sees with a lightning clearness. In the eyes of every decent man and woman she was that. Oh God, how could she bear it, how live and meet that look upon the face of everybody.

"There, let the girl alone, you," said a big rough voice as a

crowd of apprentices jostled her.

In sheer agony she turned into a side street, and the burning tears fell down her face. This was terrible, this was beyond enduring. She began to run, not knowing nor caring whither, every shop and house were shuttered, the city life was silent, nobody seemed about but these people going to their work; the perspiration was pouring out of her, her feet were beginning to tire, her arms to feel the weight of the child, but on, on, on she must go, far from these people; but whither, in the big, lonely, horrid city, where the people gaped with that terrible look upon their faces, could she go? She had no place to go; she was adrift, rudderless, homeless.

Through the lessening echoes of those scurrying feet a sudden charge, a burst of flying shadows came about. Molly drew in closer to the house-sides, and the infant gave an alarmed cry; she hushed it laboriously, and the stream of newsboys with the morning papers made off save one, who stood stock still and gazed into Molly's bent face coddling the child. The stranger was a little tattered urchin, with pinched, wrinkled face and sharp keen eyes; he clutched tightly his bundle of papers, and gazed half-transfixed at Molly, a warm, soft blush creeping into his strained features.

Molly looked up.

"It's you, missis," and he pulled his front lock reverently. "Who are you?" asked Molly, in half-alarm.

"I'm him-don't ye min' me? But 'twas no use, she died the nixt day," and his lips trembled.

"What was no use? Who died?"

"It's the half-sovran I mane—don't ye mine it."

The half sovereign! She gave a sudden start. Remember? Mind? Ha, she remembered with a vengeance.

"Yes," she answered softly, looking into the boy's face.

"Had you a friend ill?"

"It was wee Cissy; I brought the doctor, she had galloping

consumshun, and she died the day after."

He drew his sleeve across his eyes and a silence fell; that doctor had been a terrible disappointment. The lad had been so sure if he only could get a doctor of his own, not the free doctor, but one he paid himself like the rich folk his little chum could be saved. Then the half-sovereign came his way unexpectedly, but the doctor disappointed his hopes.

"Poor Cissy," said Molly, seeing his distress, but in her heart

envying this dead unknown child.

"I loved her," said the boy trembling, "and we had brave times; but she cud not live, she towl me Jesus called her home, and I promised to be good, not to stale or tell lies. I towl her about you, that ye wis lovely with yeller hair, and she said vou were the Angel Unawares. I be alwis prayin' fur Angel Unawares."

The tears, already in the girl's eves, began to fall; the arab's incense was as the perfume of rose leaves, something sweet, refreshing to her poor, wounded, hungry spirit in its Sahara She thought nobody loved her, nobody cared, the wide world was desolate. Here was a street child praying, actually praying for her, and her scalding tears fell fast; her desolate heart accepted the sacrifice from the poor unknown lad. There was a long pause.

"What is your name?" she asked in a low voice.

"Ned."

"Ned what?"

"I'm not sure," he returned vaguely, "I had a name in the house, but I've forgotten it, it is so long since I was there."

"What house?"

"The poor-house. Me and Cissy run away, and we kept thegither; she sowl flowers and papers. We had good times; then one day it was awful cowl, she was hawking sticks becise flowers was too dear, and she took bad after that cowl and nivir got better. Cissy was good, she was always hoping in Jesus. The taycher in the Ragged School made her."

'Have you no father or mother?''

"No\_I don't know. I was just in the house. I'm nobody's."

"How do you live?"

"There's the News-Letters in the morning and the Tele-

graphs in the evenings. I don't do bad."

She put her hand in her pocket and gave him a shilling. It was more than she could afford, but the lad's love and worship were sweet, and the affection of even this little gutter child was worth more than money. Already she felt as if it had done her good.

"Always do what Cissy bade you, little boy, and you will

get on well."

The lad's face shone, not so much at the shilling as because she praised him, his big hungry eyes feasted on her; he had

a thrill and glow of pleasure that were delicious.

Molly turned to go away when it flashed on her that this lad could tell her where some cheap cating-house was. It was humiliating to ask, but she was dead done, the child was like lead in her arms, and she was hungry. The lad dropped his eyes modestly, it was a staggerer; was it possible his angel was 'hungarie?'

"Take me, then," said Molly in a low tone.

He ran before her; taking her by all the short cuts, he led her adown the city to those ranges of eating houses convenient to the quay; the steaming dishes in the windows had more meaning for the news-arab than the framed menu cards at the cafes. He left her at the door, then ran away with his

papers, glad exceedingly at having seen his angel again.

Molly found herself in the eating house. Outwardly she was calm, but really trembling; she had never been in any place of the kind, and she sat down trying to look as if she were familiar with such places. She asked for tea and bread and butter, and corn-flour pudding for the baby. The viands were coarse, but she was hungry and glad to eat, glad to get sitting down, for the exhaustion upon her was fearful. After the shock of coming in was over she dreaded going out. The city seemed so empty; she felt so cut off from everybody and everything that the thought of going out was fearful; that experience with the tradesmen and apprentices of the early hours had taken the stomach out of her. She shuddered at the very thought of the streets again.

Nerving herself, she called the girl who served the tables, and asked her could she have lodgings here for a few days. The wench glanced at her in some surprise and said she would

inquire.

So it turned out that she got a little room without further trouble. No soul ever found Bethel more sweet than that poor troubled girl in her wild flight. She flung herself on the bed and sobbed as if her heart would break; the relief of finding a shelter was so intense that she gathered the infant to her, and kissed him passionately.

"John, John, God has turned this up to us. We will get

through somehow."

Then she began to pray, to confess how foolish and forgetful of God's good laws she had been. "Yes," she cried, "I loved the image You made better than ever I loved Yourself. Forgive it all. Forgive it all."

Then in sheer exhaustion she fell asleep, and slept far on into the evening, so while detectives were scouring everywhere Molly was sleeping in a little fourth-rate eating-house adjacent

to the quay.

Next day she was calmed and rested, the storm within her soul was abated somewhat. Now that this step was taken she was glad, unutterably glad to be free—free from Deloney for ever. She felt just as he did, that all was over between them, only to her it was a source of relief. Her dislike toward him was terrible; she was supremely glad to feel out of his

power. But her position was keen upon her, refined, educated,

beautiful, young, but-

If she had only one good reference she could take a situation as governess, but she had not that one, and she dare not go to ask it. She pictured to herself the horror of the lady-principal of that school she had attended if she wrote her asking one. No, that path was barred, and in her dire extremity her mind fell back to the old occupation. She could still spin, no one at the mill would ask questions. She would go back to the old work, she would earn enough to keep them both in a sort of a way; it was a real pleasure to remember she could work, that she was not beaten yet in the great battle of life.

As she mapped her future, she resolved before doing anything to go out to the old home, Sea View Cottage, to try and trace her stepmother. Perhaps she would let her live with her, perhaps she would; then her little sisters, her heart longed for them; she would like to see them once more. There was a chance they might still be in the old home, perhaps Sir Percy had been kind enough to allow them to remain.

In any case she would go out and see.

So feeling better and stronger and calmer, she took the road toward the old place once more, the baby in her arms. It was terrible that going back; every step was purgatory, every breath she drew heavy with remembrance and remorse. It was getting dusk when she reached the house, every limb in her was trembling; she stood at the familiar gate unable to go further. It was terrible to see it, terrible to know her father dead, terrible to find herself a broken woman outside the paling of the old place.

She listened for a sound of the children's voices, for the sound of the stepmother's voice. All was silent, yet the house was inhabited, for light burned behind the blind of the

kitchen window.

Still she waited, straining every nerve eagerly, now cold, now hot, trembling like an aspen leaf, yet longing intensely to see some of them running out to her and bringing her in. Oh, to be at home with them, no matter what it was like, no matter, just to feel in home. The old life up Shankhill, with its trouble and vexation, vulgarity and coarseness, even it would be welcome, any kind, any, only just home. "Sorrow" in those days, as Moore sings, "had been sweet" compared with the desolation of now. The infant stirred in her arms re-

calling her to the present; still she waited, but nobody came. Fate was harsh; she always is. She would have to go every foot of the way. With a terrible sensation she opened the old

wooden gate, and crept up the path to the door.

Memory flashed over her that last time she left this house—her father leading her to the door, his beaming lingering look that was their farewell, and neither of them deemed it; the gay, blithe heart she had carried out never to carry back. How would she knock? How go in? But she must; it was already dark, and perhaps she would have to go back to town; maybe they would not take her in.

With a timid shaking hand she knocked—silence, fierce silence, but the light still burned, somebody was inside.

Another shaking knock.

Ah, yes, a foot was coming, she heard it cross the hall; it was her stepmother's—would she let her in—would she slap the door in her face—terrible—her heart sank—she wished she could run away, it would kill her if she "barged"; but she dare not run, a hand was on the bolt, the door opened, a flood of light fell on her from the old lamp hanging in the hall.

She was in a terrible state, only just able to see that the woman before her was not her stepmother, and in that dire, dread moment she could not tell whether she was most glad

or most sorry.

"Mrs. Bennett," she breathed weakly, "I called to see her." "Come in," said the stranger kindly, recognising her at once, for her story had been talked of all over the countryside and through the little town of Holywood.

"But Mrs. Bennett?" said Molly again.

"The Bennetts left here some time ago; but come in, come in,

you look tired."

And the woman took her arm kindly and brought her into the old home. The girl's heart felt as if it would burst as she stood again in the kitchen. A fire was burning brightly in the grate, a small tea-table was drawn up before it ready laid for tea.

"Can you tell me anything of them, where they are gone, if

they are well?"

"Have a cup of tea. I am just readying it; my husband will not be home for a few minutes." She poured the tea out and brought it over in her hand.

Thank you—you will excuse me—I—could not swallow

"Try, my dear, try, you are tired; let me hold the infant for you."

"You are too kind," said Molly, the unshed tears trembling on her eyelashes as she relinquished the heavy child. She took the tea. Never poor girl was in more need of a friendly word or a kindly deed as this poor girl, returning with forlorn hope to her old home now occupied by strangers. As she took the tea the stranger told her what she knew of the Bennet's. The father died suddenly, the little children were in an orphanage, the mother working in one of the big hat-shops down the town.

"Our clergyman told me himself; perhaps he could tell you where to find them. He was in great distress about yourself.'

Molly looked gratefully at her; the voice soothed her, the kind solicitude in every tone made this vision of eruption and separation not so painful. While they were speaking a foot came crunching up the path, a quick rap-tap at the knocker, Molly set down the tea cup hastily on the table, and the mistress of the house opened the door, the baby still in her

"Miss Bennett," called out a strong voice.

Molly almost dropped; she had believed this was the woman's husband coming home, and had risen to leave.

She staggered forward into the hall; a familiar figure stood outside upon the step, a big bag upon his shoulder, a small lamp in his hand.

"Miss Molly Bennett," he repeated quickly.

"Yes," said Molly, recovering herself slightly and putting out her hand.

"Are you Miss Bennett?"
"Yes," she returned steadily.

And the postman deposited a letter in her hand, and went

on his way.

"Well, if that is not a Providence nothing is. Just to think of you being here and that coming," and the woman dandled the baby in her arms smilingly.

"It's from Africa," said Molly, glancing at the letter with-

out noticing the remark.

"Come on in and rest ye."

"No, thank you," returned Molly, taking the baby from her, "and may God bless you for the way you treated me this night." With a swift motion she bent her head and kissed the woman's hand. She flew away, the letter pushed into her breast, rubbed against the ruby-heart ring. She had the ring still. Nurse had found it round her neck, and after her recovery had returned it, and Molly had put it back into her bosom.

# CHAPTER XVIII.

As she hurried back along the road, the fearful smash of their old home killing every hope of shelter there, showing her entire desolation, her complete adriftness, an awful tiredness, a sense of sickness at her heart overtook her. Yea the letter in her bosom seemed to burn; it beat against that dead load in her heart, it whispered in no soft tones you have a friend. A fear of his anger and reproach mingled into her very blood. The past stood out in all its failure, in its dark unchangeableness; it was irrevocable, nothing could be altered. "What I have written, I have written," is the strange

unalterable sum-total of every life lived on earth. is unchangeable, it is perpetual, whether good or whether evil it remains. Time goes on, and we are preferress to arrest his passage, or to alter the message written on his wings. Molly felt this, she stood before the problem of it, helpless to alter one iota of all that had gone before, yet her human weakness reached to the letter of the man had betraved, the man she had sworn to marry, but who had been forgotten, swept aside in the deep, strong current of passionate joy-filled love. Now that the current had borne her on to wreckage and despair she dared in her poor, undone human-ness to look again to him as an anchor of hope. Yet in her little room, as she broke the seal of that letter every limb in her trembled, yea, her very thoughts trembled, and with the darkness of the past and the darkness of the present filling her, she was glad that those thousand leagues of land and water hid her from his eyes.

"Cape Town, South Africa,
"Prince George Hotel,
"12th September, 18—.

"My Dearest-,"

She paused; this great darkness was terrible, her very eyes were full of it, but yet that was the start.

"My Dearest,—I have ventured to write to your own address.

It is far over a year since I heard from you or of you. Mr. H—— seems to have forgotten me as well as yourself. My two last letters to him have been unanswered. I have been worried about you; why have you not written? Have you ceased to care for me? Is all over between us? or, perhaps my letters to you have gone astray. Write me, tell me something decided, the anxiety is awful, at times it has been so

strong upon me that I have been unfit for work.

"It is well Sir Percy Lyle has done something for you, but Molly, I have plenty now, plenty, plenty. That is the grand thing about this country; a fellow can get rich in no time. I left the sheep-farming, it was impossible to keep the natives from stealing—fifty would go to-night, the next night another fifty, and so on. I jacked the whole show and made off to the gold-fields. I have worked hard, many a night like Jacob with a stone for a pillow, but the great thing that upholds me is you, all is for you.

"This is a great country, the natives are fine, big fellows, but as Pat might say "lazy as butther's grazy." The moonlight here is magnificent, the Dutch women and miners' wives do their sewing and knitting outside their cabin doors in the

moonlight.

"When I gaze about me at the great mountains, and the sweeping gully torrents, and the deep violet sky, or the big stretches of country sweeping out like an ocean—away—away —further than eye can penetrate into hot, glistening sands, I get like the natives, awe-inspired. The majesty, the largeness, the vivid colouring, the calm desolate silence whisper in one's soul of God, or as the natives say of the "Spirit." natives need religion; it is time the churches thought of their poor, black neighbours. I am training a horse for you. have called her Erin, after our native land; she is white as snow with not a black hair. Everybody rides here, and you must if you come out. Molly, will you come? I am rich now; it would be no expense for me to go over for you, but I don't want to be arrested on that old charge, and I am bogged in business. There is a scheme afoot among the miners to purchase larger machines for crushing the quartz, they have put me at the head of the affair; that speaks well for your Belfast boy; by-the-way, everybody out here calls me'the Belfast boy.'

"Molly, write to me as soon as you get this; give me a

decided answer, and I will know how to act. Don't have me sending my man three hundred miles across country for nothing. Once I went myself, rode through the sun and over the scorching sand for disappointment.

"Remember me to your father and mother, and the children.

"Ever you true lover,

"WM CRAWFORD."

What uprising was in her soul! What panorama rushing before her mind! All she had flung away, all—for this, and her wild eyes flew round the small room over the "whinging" infant and over herself in her fearful loneliness and despair. With a groan of anguish she flung herself on the bed and buried her face. Every way she looked her position seemed darker and blacker, but the fearful horrible a pect of it in Crawford's eves shook her to the depths. It came home to her keen and

cutting, breeding most terrible, indepictable remorse.

Do not be surprised that she was ill for a few days after that letter, that the feelings it inspired laid her prostrate. She seemed to give way utterly before it, and the break-up of her old home, and her complete sense of desolation and friendlessness, but the call of life and work was disning in her ears, Need demanded that she responded to it. Her small sum of money was almost exhausted, she was next to penniless. With a fearful effort she strove to break from memory, to grapple that skeleton and lock it in the cupboard of forgetfulness. She must work, not another day must pass without applying at one or other of the big mills. But she had no clothes suitable for entering a mill-vard, no money to buy them, and by some means a coarse skirt and shawl must be got.

She reviewed everything, she had nothing that could be pawned saved the infant's cloak, it was horrible to have to do it, but it must be done; with the few shillings it would bring she could get a second-hand skirt and shawl and go to work, if she had only the "lying time" wrought things would not be so bad, she could make ten or twelve shillings every week, and they would get through. She looked at the cloak painfully, it was a beautiful garment of finest white silk, broidered and stitched with the finest needlework. She had a woman's eye for a beautiful thing, and it hurt her to think of parting it, then suddenly the ring in her bosom seemed to speak, it whispered. "Me, me, me,"

She took it out and looked at it, that symbol of a love pure as childhood,—sweet, beautiful, magnificent, every brilliant flash seemed to stab her, yet the utter helplessness of her position demanded that her old charm must go. Oh it was bitter, it was terrible; it was the hardest thing she had yet faced; it was like cutting the last cable of her old true friend.

"Willie, Willie," she moaned, "If you only knew. If either of us had deemed the night you bought that ruby-heart that the day would come to me when I would have to pawn it, when I would be like this. Oh! my God, if I could but

undo everything."

In spite of herself the blinding tears rushed from her eyes, and the hated skeleton thrust its head out of the cupboard.

But lest her nerve should give way she hasted out to pawn the ring, asking the landlady to mind her baby half-an-hour. She flew on up the city, never pausing till once more in the very centre. Here the crush necessitated a slower pace. She stopped before one of the large fashionable shop windows, she suddenly became aware there were no pawn shops about here. Up Shankhill or up the Falls Roads they swarmed, but in the swell thoroughfares of the city there were no such establishments. While she stood debating with herself which of these districts to go to, the conversation of two fashionable ladies, also standing at this shop window arrested her, a name familiar caught her ear, half unwilling, half fascinated, she listened.

They were discussing a burning topic Molly knew nothing of.

"I hear Mrs. Deloney is almost prostrate."

The reply was not audible, and the first speaker went on.

"Are you going?"

Again the reply was lost, and the other voice rattled on carelessly.

"I wouldn't miss it for worlds."

The ladies turned, Molly looked curiously at them, she knew neither of them, but the question had arisen in her mind, who was Mrs. Deloney. Her face hardened, her lips tightened as she wondered was he married; she could quite believe it. While the ladies shook hands one of them looking up caught Molly's gaze. She paused on her step, and advancing easily, murmured softly.

"Miss Bennett, I believe."

Molly coloured with distress, If the ground had opened

she could not have been more shocked; it came upon her so unexpectedly, and the old name on a polite tongue sounded so soft and pleasing that it had a peculiar pathos in her ear.

"Madam," said Molly, rising to the moment, "I have not the honour of your acquaintance."

"I am Lady Lyle," was the response.

Molly's colour deepened, her head grew giddy, she put her hand up as if to steady it. Her fearful position came keen upon her, she felt herself under the search light of her cousin's opinion, she saw herself a blot upon the family, a disgrace to her sex, a horrible creature that women drew their skirts in from; she longed to run away.

"Excuse me, Lady Lyle," she gasped in confusion, moving

a step.

Lady Lyle put her hand on Molly's arm kindly, she looked into that young face, so rarely beautiful yet so indescribably sad; her heart trembled, there was a terrible change upon it since that concert night in the Ulster Hall. Ah, she had feared for her that night, but Denny had out-reached by far all her fears.

"Let me help you," she breathed softly, "No one shall be the wiser. I have not your acquaintance, but Sir Percy

told me who you were one night in the theatre."

"If you mean money, I-am-not short," returned Molly grasping the glowing ring as if it were a purse of sovereigns, and not noticing the other remark.

"I mean sympathy," returned Mab, somewhat nettled, "I

never blamed you."

Mab had suffered the sharpness of slighted love, but she knew nothing of that fierce fang of blasted love, or of the terrible fiend that ruin breeds in a woman's breast, so as she strove to comfort she little deemed the black desolation she stood before. There was a pause, Molly understood her fully. she also knew, but too well, how hopeless were her kind intentions.

Nothing under God's Heaven could comfort her, nothing, except the past expunged, and that could never be. Hers was a soul that could be satisfied with nothing less than what

it had lost.

"What did Sir Percy think?" breathed Molly in an awed whisper, dreading, yet wanting to hear the verdict.

"He was vexed, I never saw him so much upset. He told me privately if you had been his own sister he could not have been more cut up. It has never been mentioned since the letter."

"Letter! What letter?"

"Your letter to Sir Percy."

"My letter to Sir Percy? I do not understand; but I never sent a letter to Sir Percy."

"There came a letter signed Madalina. It made Sir Percy furious, he gave up all search for you after that, and your affair has never been referred to again between us."

Molly stood stunned, here indeed was a revelation. He had not been satisfied until he damned her to her relative

behind her back.

"What was in that letter?" she asked slowly.

"I never saw it."

Quite true, her future husband had considered it unfit for her eyes, but she was cognisant of its outline and general tone. Molly's quick imagination framed it and realised immediately that her character had got its death blow in that written lie.

"He must have sent it," she said painfully, "I know nothing of it; I never penned it; I never thought of such a

thing."

Again there was a pause, into Molly's eves a deep lambent flame shot, since she ran away her mind had been curiously free from Deloney; now that slacked fire of hate enkindled every atom of her being. That rage, so helpless usually, that throbs the heart of every wronged woman leapt in her like a demon. If he had been present she would have sprung on him like a tiger, and tried to tear the very eyes out of him, every personal injury seemed to pale before this black treachery; this horrible, deliberate lie to Sir Percy Lyle.

Lady Lyle saw that the young girl was disturbed, she hasted

to turn the conversation.

"To-morrow is his last day."

"Last day! How?"

"Don't you know? Surely he has not deserted you. is going to India with his regiment; they leave to-morrow at twelve noon by H.M.S. Victory; to-night the Lord Mayor and Corporation are giving the officers a farewell ball in the Town Hall."

Molly listened, she cared not that he went to ten thousand Indies; in fact, she was glad, relieved and satisfied to hear that so soon the fear of ever meeting him would be done away, yet the vision of him smiling, handsome, flattered, unharmed in character or standing, by his deceit and wickedness, leaving the town covered with the applause and well wishes of everybody, while she was ruined, and her child branded, maddened her.

"Has he left you," breathed Lady Lyle.

"Left me," repeated Molly, almost savagely. "Yes, at the very altar, I was actually in the Church, and the clergyman in his place. He left me a public spectacle of disgrace."

"Give me your address, let me help you, that's a dear

girl."

"'No," said Molly bluntly, "No, but I thank you—forget me—forget my cruel fate that threw me across that devil's path."

Lady Lyle bent closely forward.

"Forgive me, in God's name, tell me the truth; was it

Denny?"

Molly gave her a look that is indescribable, insult, fury, half-madness mingled into speechless anger at 110 doubt in such a question.

"Have you ever doubted it? Has anyone ever dared to doubt it? Has he ever dared to deny it?" and another wild, furious

thought of that letter flashed through her mind.

"Good-bye," said Molly, "Some day my cousin may learn the truth, but I beseech you, do not tell him you have seen me."

Lady Lyle did not reply; she was certain not to tell Sir Percy, he would most probably be displeased at her recognising and speaking to this erring woman, even though she was his own cousin.

"Good-bye," she replied simply, "If you need a friend, remember me, you know my address, of course, Lyle Park;

good-bye."

Molly let her take her hand limply, and the young bride went away saddened exceedingly. She could never know what Molly suffered, but she was beginning to understand, to taste the sweetness of her own happiness, and could contrast things, and it was awful to happy Mab to see this young, heautiful girl in such agony. She was vexed at having asked that question, but Denny had denied it so strongly, and that letter—that awful letter had staggered all of them—

now it seemed that was his work too, awful, awful. But Mab's indignation was as nothing to the passionate stromboli in desolate, doomed Molly. It lashed her into fury the more extreme because so impotent, she could do nothing, absolutely nothing to him; he was just the same, rich, young, handsome, smiled on, and smiling, going away from the scenes of her downfall, from the very memory of it without even a slight upon him, while her own cousin had cursed her and blamed her, had believed his written abomination.

She must make him suffer; she must gall him to the soul; she must revenge that letter; she must send some sting with him into that far land; some sting that years would not extinguish; he must not leave old Ireland, dashing, smiling, made much of on every hand without feeling the past. shall he," she cried, "If there's life in me."

Her voice aroused herself; she was far across the city; she had spun on forgetful of her errand, forgetful of her necessity. the glittering ring lying feebly in her palm. Carried away by her passion of vengeance, that thirst of humanity, that insatiable venom that burns as fire, swallowed all that was best and highest in her. She called for vengeance vengeance-vengeance-with that awful woman-call that is so wild, so puny, yet so insisting unto the very end.

### CHAPTER XIX.

LIEUTENANT DELONEY was torn with trouble. Detectives had done everything. They had found out the visit to her old home, but further all was trackless. Denny's consuming horror was that she would murder the child and then commit suicide. It was terrible to have his affections lacerated, but to have all aggravated by this torturing fear was beyond almost his endurance. Every hour and moment since her flight had been one prolonged so spense; never peace, never rest, every broken sleep had that terrible shadow of suicide. Never a self-murder up or down the country, but almost sent him into a fit.

What a strange woman she was, refusing to marry him yet adoring him, and what adoration, what passion of feeling throbbed in her bosom. In some moments he fancied her arms about him, her glorious eyes looking into him stealing the very heart out of his bosom, her lips clinging to his in that wild way of woman, and now it was all gone; all gone save the haunting memory, the picture of her beauty, the passion-music of her love, gone, yet not gone, some part

of it remained with him and must still remain.

As the time narrowed, his excitement deepened, his heart failed him, the horror of the situation became more appalling; how could he face India in utter ignorance of her whereabouts? She might not even have bread and butter, and the infant, too, might be in rank starvation. Again and again the thought came to him not to go, to throw up the sponge, but he loved his profession, he felt at this terrible crisis it was the only thing left that could console him, the something personal, one's own, that is so sweet.

He must go, and so the day before the departure came on. He was spending it at home, his last day in the old home. His people were in great trouble; his mother prostrate; the strain of his great illness had told on her, now the pain of this parting

was tearing her fond and doting heart; it was possible mother and son would never meet; possible that this separation would part them all for ever. The shadow was on the whole house, everyone evaded reference to it, for that reason perhaps it damped their spirits more. The governor, as the young men called their rather, tried to be hearty, but aitnough everybody smiled the heaviness remained. As the atternoon passed away the gloom thickened, the last moments or privacy were close upon them, for they were all going to the ball, going with heavy hearts. Mrs. Deloney threw her arms round her son convulsively.

"Oh, Denny, Denny," she cried, "I can never give you up." "Hush, hush, mother," he whispered huskily, the tears struggling to his eyes in spite of himself.

"You are going now in earnest, the world—life is taking you. I feel it, my heart is already empty. You shall never be mine in the old way. Oh, Denny, my son."

And she wept bitterly.

"Mother," he said softly, "I will, I will, I will always be your son in the old way, just your boy."

But the elder woman knew life had come to absorb him into her great stream, henceforth he was to pass on while she was to stay here. He was going as she said "in earnest," going where she might not, could not go. The deep rupture

that comes to the heart of every mother had come.

The brothers lingered in the study, they had not said much, the unhappy tightened feeling between them loosened slightly before this separation. Denny had much to say, he knew not how to speak, his feelings were choking him. As they stood together they knew their good-bye had come. There would be no time to-night, no time in the morning when the fuss and stir and publicity would have begun.

"Victor, old boy, it's close to us-good-bye; vou won't think

hardly of me-you won't -."

His lips trembled and a lump in his throat stopped him, he held out his hand frankly.

His brother gave him his hand.

"I know you were angry, but Victor, you have lived above life, you have never felt the temptations, you—have—never loved. I loved her, I love her still, I am going away, perhaps never to return—perhaps never to see her in this world—Victor, dare I ask you ——?" He stopped almost overcome. "I have opened my heart to nobody, but if you find her—You know she has run away from Nurse Brown—I am in total ignorance of her whereabouts—tell her I am true. Give her my address, and Victor—she is penniless. Think of it as done to me—to Denny, your own brother. We loved each other as boys, surely as men we have some of the old loyal feeling. As man to man I beseech you—Victor—help her—that—girl—of—my—heart."

"Denny," said his brother, not unmoved by his appeal,

"She has enchanted you."

There could be no other explanation of it. Victor Deloney, although a student and ardent disciple of the Church believed firmly that the wide field of occultism would yield much if thoroughly explored. The servants who were about them when children, believed firmly, and talked freely before them of such things, and the old lingering surmises, and indefinite ideas of childhood had left traces; surely nothing else could make such havoc of Denny—a poor Protestant, half-mad millgirl to lead him such a dance as this; he cursed her in his heart.

"She has indeed," he repeated in great butterness.

"Perhaps," returned Denny sadly. The day was he would have laughed at such a remark, but now there was not a laugh in him. The child—Victor," he resumed, labouring under great difficulty. "In case anything happens to me, it is my wish—it is my will—if Uncle's property comes to me—if anything from father—let it be his—as—as—if——."

He stopped; he was going to say as if I were his father, then

he remembered; but he did not say as if I were married.

"I have written to my solicitors—a sealed letter, those are its contents. I have constituted you sole executor. In the mean time," he went on quickly, "find them, I will bear the expense myself."

"I will see to the child," returned his brother firmly. Here he was on good ground, his conscience approved him, but

toward the woman it was different.

"I am totally ignorant of their whereabouts, Victor, but you will trace them, old boy, I feel certain of that," he said, striving after his own cheerfulness, but it was a poor effigy of his old smile that haunted his lips.

Silence, deep silence, the breathing of the two men could be heard audibly, each looked away from the other, then their eyes met. A certain motion touched each to embrace, the one waited on the other, then they clasped hands—warmly—tightly—the next instant Denny had passed out of the room. Victor stood still; he was much moved, a haunting, queer feeling had come over him, something—some presentment that Denny and he had parted—for longer than mind could measure, thrilled him to the soul.

The night drew on, the hour for the ball was almost come. Denny was in no form to dance, to meet people, to go through the tedium of a public ball, but for the honour of the regiment, for the sake of his own people and the large circle of their

friends he felt bound to go.

A send-off of this sort is like no other social function: a leaven runs through the entire gathering that it must be made a good-night, that for some at least it would be the last ball in the old country, and everything must be done to make it a success. The great people of the entire city had been asked, and it was a gallant company that filed into the Town Hall. The front entrance was ablaze with light, tall palms and ferns adorned the vestibule. In the centre of the hall. under the great swing gasalier, stood the Lord Mayor in his robes of office, supported by other civic functionaries welcoming the guests. It was a brilliant sight as officer after officer, in full regimentals, with their lady friends shimmering in silks and satins filed past. The whole building was aglow with light. One of the rooms was turned into a conservatory, banks of ferns and flowers, Chinese lanterns scattered profusely, and red velvet lounges made a pleasing retreat from the great hall where the dancing was to take The great hall never presented a more brilliant appearance than that night; the glowing scarlets of the soldiers, the pale hues of the women's dresses, the civic robes of the Mayor and Aldermen, the colours of the regiment, the national flag, the city flag, the lights, the flowers, the music, the gorgeous meet of a great fashionable assembly made a picture intense with movement, colour, and picturesqueness. Many a heart beat high mingling in the frou-frou, many an eye gleamed, many a cold spirit thawed amid the glowing scene, yet under all, through all the minor chord of sadness played.

Lieutenant Deloney was miserable; an odd line in the Old Testament scripture described him, "grief in the heart of

a man shall bring him low."

Amid this gallant show he was low indeed, nothing ever tried him so much as this ordeal of appearing happy-of speaking affably to every one, when his entire spirit was full of the blackness of darkness. He dare not think of her, yet she was continually rising up before him, blotting out the very image of this brilliant scene. He seemed to see nothing but her intense white face, her glowing eyes, her shining hair-herself in her magnificent youth and beauty; so powerful was the impression upon him that he rushed into the conservatory and hid himself from the confusion of the crowd.

Ah, he who had hurt many a woman, had laughed lightly at his many flirtations, was he to feel the longing, the loneliness of a heart despised, a heart wounded by its beloved?

"What a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Lady Lyle was watching him, her keen eye divined he was ill at ease; she managed to leave his mother with a group of friends, and slipped after him into the conservatory. had found one of the remotest seats; his eyes heavy with grief were bent upon the ground. Mab's rep was light, but not too light to arrest the acute nervous hearing of a suffering man.

"Mab," he said, looking up, trying to smile. He made room for her beside him, and she sat down. She looked at him, she fancied he never looked more handsome; he seemed more genuine and sincere without his everlasting smile. He had no smile upon his lips to-night; it was hard to believe he was

false and wicked—yet she knew the truth.

"Are you sorry to leave Belfast?" she asked after a brief pause.

"Yes and no," he answered gravely. "Denny, that is a woman's answer."

"Well, they always give the best answers."

Their old dislike had smoothed away. Once the tease about marrying her was off, Denny forgot the petty annoyance of her brunt remarks, and she, lost in her deep affection for her husband, had drawn a veil over that passing fascination for her guardian's son.

Mab had much on her heart; the scene of the morning was fresh upon her, Molly's wild disturbance had made a deep impression on her mind. Such personal despair, such torturing, hopeless grief were a cruel revelation. She had

come to Denny to see if anything could be done. It was a delicate subject, she paled before touching it, but for the sake of that poor girl. What of the proprieties, what of conventualities before the awful condition of that young woman!

"Denny," she said softly, "Have you seen Miss-ahem-

Miss Bennett lately?"

His heart leapt, he held his fingers shut tightly, and his drooped eyes never lifted.

"Not lately." " Why?"

She waited his reply; it was long in coming; it came very slowly, very truthfully, very painfully.

"I cannot see her—she—left. I—cannot find—her."
Mab looked up half startled. The disbelief in the gesture, in her shocked eyes was unmistakable.

"On my honour, Mab, this is the truth."

There was a deep pause, he seemed intently earnest, but the vision of the girl was a strong contradiction.

"Denny," she said, "I saw her down town to-day."

He started almost violently. Hope flashed through the clouded darkness of his spirit.

"You saw her-are you sure-sure absolutely?"

"Yes, I spoke to her for a few minutes."

A sense of relief so intense ran through him that he trembled, as yet the awful deed was not committed; she was living yet; it was balm to lay upon his heart.

"Mab, thank you, it was a kindness to myself."

"How did this happen?" she said in a low pained voice.

"Can nothing be done?"

He was so moved, in such evident emotion, that Mab found herself almost undone. If he cared for this girl why had he played so poor a part. Why let things develop into this state?

"Denny, she told me you took her to the altar, and left

her there—unwed."

He winced, it stung him to be reminded of that fatal day. Oh God, that he had been a man—that he had gone right on; to-night she would have been here with him, honoured, respected, radiant, the queen of the whole assembly, the youngest, most beautiful woman in this bright galaxy, and above all she would have been his own.

"Since then," he murmured, faintly, "I offered her marriage, and she refused."

"But why disappoint her?" That must have been a galling

thing to her."

Galling? Yes, how much so; an honoured married woman can not deem; but something of the horror of it had stood before Mab to-day, had tingled every nerve in her bosom.
"Because I was a fool," he returned, bitterly, and that

scene on the Church step seemed to rise and grin in his face.

They were silent. A deep pause fell over them. Denny was much disturbed, he would have liked to ask Mab was the baby with her; the thought almost reached across his lips, but he checked the words. It would do no good and shock Mab more and more. The silence seemed to increase between them.

"Mab," he said, at last, "If you ever chance on her again, tell her I am faithful; send her out to me in India; help her; she is penniless."

'I offered to help her and she refused."

"That is her way, I know for a certainty she is on the brink of starvation, but her pride is terrible. It is the very

pride of Lucifer."

"I have heard," said Mab, thoughtfully, "that the pride of the noble poor equals that of a king; Denny," she went on softly. "If I can get her; if I can send her to you, you will marry her? promise me —.."

He took her hand, and with all the truth in him, swore to

her.

"Think," she went on, slowly, "what you would have gained if you had brought her into the true Church—think

He interrupted, he was afraid to wound Mah, for she was a keen Roman Catholic, and his ideas of the Church had

widened far from hers.

"Mab," he said intensely, "the pity of it. We love each other, but her stubborn unforgiveness of that day at the altar

parts us."

"I will do my very best, Denny," she whispered, and her words crept like comfort on his ruffled soul. She went away, she had to, numerous partners were waiting her, and his mother needed her to support her, but her spirits were damped; the ball, with its music, its light soft rhythm of even steps. its soft laughs, its low tones, its breath of flowers, its flashing of jewels, its whispers of souls, its flash and brilliance and enjoyment had no charm; she could not shake off a feeling of oppression. Denny was suffering. This love-affair had shrivelled him into a worm wilted creature. Not long ago he had been the gayest of the gay, the flirt of flirts, the merriest heart of any gathering; now he sat apart, wounded to the quick, unable, unwilling to see or to be seen.

Even as Mab danced with her light, quick step, the suffering of these two seemed to encompass her like a cloud, through its deep gloom she could see nothing but the wild disturbance of the woman and the stung agony of the man. A presentiment haunted her of something in connection with these two; her eyes always stole back to Deloney as he moved among the guests, as if questioning him for revelation and light.

### CHAPTER XX.

WHILE the ball was proceeding Molly sat in her humble room seething with passionate emotions, her whole being was on fire. She felt the flight of time, felt her opportunity lessening with every ding of the clock. What could she do? Nothing presented itself; she was helpless, useless, do-less. Again and again before her mind rose the young officer, erect and splendid in his uniform. She fancied him dancing with some woman, whispering to her at every swing of the waltz; perhaps the woman was his wife, "perhaps," she called aloud in half-

hysteria, "a believing flattered fool like I was."

The picture awoke no jealousy, no wish to change places with that woman. No, no, every wish, every sentiment with regard to this man had passed from her save this thirst, this keen desire, blasting as hell, for revenge; but here she was in this room, ruined, alone, penniless, unable, unfit to lift one finger against him. She strode over to the bed where the infant was sleeping soundly, a smile on his beautiful face, a peach-like flush tinging his dazzling complexion. She looked at the child's wondrous beauty, but her wild rage and vengeance made her see only the symbol of her betrayal, the sign of her ruination

"Aha," she said bitterly, "he goes free. I have you to fetter me, to hold me down, to draw the eye of the world upon me, to brand me before God and men. Yes, to brand me. Branded, branded," she cried, "with worse than heated iron."

She gazed long upon the sleeping child. As she stood still looking, the Albert Memorial clock, which was not far off, began to strike twelve. She started violently. Twelve o'clock; the ball would be about its height. Soon the guests would be thinning home, but for a little while yet everybody would be in the highest flush, throbbing with anticipation of a brilliant hour; before these moments pass whatever was to be done must be done. He was laughing and making laughter for all, but she would spoil it somehow. She would go and take his child

to the Town Hall; she would call him out and leave it with him, if he did not receive it from her hands she would fling it at his feet. What right had she to bear the burden and the blame, and he go free? How dare he lie about her to Sir Percy Lyle? It would scandalise his fine friends; it would open the eyes of the women who were silly enough to believe his cursed soft talk; if there was a blush in him surely it would lap his countenance. It would be sweet to lower him, to banish his smiling nonchalance, if only for a moment. The proud, the gay, the rich, the learned, the elite of Ulster would be there to take leave of the gallant officers; the entire building would reek with the affair. He would burn with shame; each way he turned the knowing look and subdued titter would smite him in the face. It was of no consequence what they thought of her, things could be no worse than they were. She did not care one flip of her finger for one of them, from the Lord Mayor down, or the Lord Mayor up.

Ten thousand tongues could not have such eloquence as the little fat bundle she would leave at his feet. She laughed at the mental picture of his confusion, his burning brow and

flashing eye.

She crossed the room to the little mantel-board. Into a cheap vase was stuck a pencil; it happened to be a copying ink pencil which she had been given instead of a pen by her landlady when beginning a letter to Crawford.

She leaned over the unconscious infant, and traced in large round characters across the child's white brow: "Denny

Deloney."

The child stirred: perhaps to his infantile mind one of those big queer buzzing things that flew so mysteriously before his eyes was walking on his brow, but Molly held his chin firmly, and when she wet her finger and passed it over the writing the name was painfully plain: DENNY DELONEY.

Molly laughed. "My copy book is right," she cried. "The pen is mightier than the sword. His sword shall never

vanquish that. My triumph shall be complete."

She lifted up the infant and put on his rich robe, a match-less article of Irish sheer lawn, covered with the finest hand embroidery, and round the skirt hem a flounce of rose-point lace that Nurse Brown's own hands had made. Then the costly silk cloak. Molly surveyed the child, a sort of malicious pleasure shining in her eye.

"Not one of them," she said, in a bitter disdain, "is better dressed, none of them could hold a candle to him, in looks; he is beautiful. His very beauty will make the sting the deeper."

A sort of glow upheld her. She went out of the house quietly, but not unobserved, for these eating-houses along the wharf streets are open practically all night through.

"That lodger's a rum go," said one of the men, looking

up from his supper.

"You don't mind her," snapped the landlady, who believed Molly to be some real lady in trouble, and had hopes of good long payment and little bother.

Molly passed on into the night; it was damp and cold, full of autumnal dark. Many drunk people, and worse were still

upon the streets down here in the city's slum-heart.

Her speed increased until it was a run; her breath seemed to be repressed until she gained the open full-lighted

thoroughfare.

Here from the Albert Clock it was a straight walk of a couple of minutes to the Town Hall. The light was streaming from the hall, dazzling and vivid in the darkness of the night, and as she approached, the strains of music floated up the silent air. The numerous sightseers that had haunted the entrance to catch a glimpse of the "style" going in to the hall had dwindled off, a gush of light flowed out and shone upon the giant form of a constable moving back and forward; odd coachmen and cabbies were upon the pavement, thinking every moment an hour but trying to be happy with old yarns and sly refreshers from the buffet within.

Molly came into the near vicinity, and became conscious of these men, her face hardened, and her lips set. "I must not be a duffer," she said to herself, holding the infant tightly in her arms, yet her courage paled. As she passed nearer a street urchin darted up to her and looked into her face; she

started violently.

"Ned," she gasped; "you-you-here."

She trembled like a leaf. The lad came upon her so rudely and unexpectedly, breaking the intensity of her thought that she almost collapsed. The poor street boy had had a bad week, and scenting this ball, had been hanging round all enight, hoping to chance an odd "tuppence" for calling a cab or "doing the watch" while the coachman took a draw of

his pipe behind the carriage. As she paused, looking into the big pleased eyes of the arab, the thought flashed over her like inspiration that she could use him; that he might help her through with this job. It was the sheer resolution of despairing helplessness.

"Ned," she said, quickly, "do you remember the gentleman who was with me that day in Castle Place when you got

the half-sovereign?"

"Aw do."

"Would you know him again?"

"Too sure," he answered, knowingly.

"Well, I want you to come with me; I cannot pay you, remember, at least to-night."

"It's all right," said the boy, generously.

You must come into the Town Hall with me. Repeat 'Lieutenant Deloney.'"

"Live-ten-ant Da-lone-ey," he repeated slowly.

"You won't forget it."

"No fears, aw'm ye're ticket. Live-ten-ant Da-lone-ey."

Now the servants and officials and loiterers had seen this little encounter, for it had taken place on the street a few yards from the main entrance. Molly went on steadily, cruelly conscious of these onlookers. As she went nearer every eye focussed on her; a sort of wild idea flew over her that these officials and servants and red-tapeism of such a function would screen him. His position, his wealth, his family, everybody, everything would stand as a wall around him. With a fierceness of purpose she nerved herself, determined to break through everything, everybody; the blight, the ban, the shadow would dim his success this night, if it would cost her her life.

"Come," she said, in a tense whisper to the poor naked

arab, "come with me."

She went boldly forward, throwing back her head and shoulders, and walking with a proud and haughty air, the arab crouching in the shadow of her tall figure. The men about watched closely as they passed through the awning over the front entrance. The constable on duty saluted; he had had a good supper, and the hour was late. Molly walked on firmly; the Cerberus in brass button was leaning, very happy, on the big table in the vestibule. He came forward

pleasantly. "I must see Lieutenant Deloney; ask him to come

here if you please."

The man surveyed her for a second, refusal was upon his tongue; but the fixed determination on the lady's face cowed him. Her youth, her beauty, her rich dress unsettled him as to her rightful status, but he made no mistake as to that haughty demeanour that would brook no refusal. He bowed and moved backward a few steps towards one of the waiters who was passing into the ball-room with a tray.

"Here's a foine to-do. A lady wi' a chile in her arms is axing fur Livetenant Daloney; if ye see him give him the nod. I can't hiv her here, and her monkey's up; she manes

business."

The waiter passed on into the ball-room; the music was filling the whole building. The ball-room presented a brilliant scene, everyone seemed upon the floor, certainly young Deloney was—his tall figure distinct amid the whirl of passing forms. The Colonel's daughter was his companion, and as the waiter passed near to them he looked critically-certainly they were a handsome couple. He wondered how he would or could "give the nod."

The waiter lingered about. The waltz went gloriously; no one seemed to drop out, but as he looked he saw the young officer swing into the promenade that skirted the room, and walk leisurely up the carpeted way. He was trying his best to be agreeable, but the effort was irksome; the sense of mirth and music and pleasure floating about made him conscious more acutely of his own mirthless condition. He was longing intensely that the next hour was over, so that he could decently leave.

He found a seat for his partner. Then looking round went towards his mother and Mab, who were sitting chatting with some friends. Before he reached them the waiter caught him up, and the message was delivered. Lieutenant Deloney was surprised, but never for a moment did he imagine Molly would do such a thing. He thought of Lady Winnie, and his brow darkened. Then an idea that it might be Nurse Brown with some special news made him decide to go down to the front

entrance.

Molly, strung to the very highest excitement, was watching every door; she felt the eyes of every passer-by, and there were many passing from room to room. Suddenly down the hallway she saw Lieutenant Deloney, and he saw her. Never did he look more handsome or noble looking, his uniform vivid in the glaring lights. A spasm caught him; he knew

not whether of pleasure or pain.

Molly, with a swift movement, threw back the infant's veil. "Ned," she whispered in tense tones, "here he comes; take the infant, go and meet him. Tell him this child is for him." She crammed the infant into the arab boy's arms, and deliberately pushed him towards the approaching officer. Then with a swift step, and her head thrown back, she almost flew past the astonished servants and numerous gentlemen hanging about. Lieutenant Deloney was not a nervous man, no Irish soldier is, but at the sight of the street-boy with his ragged clothes and bare feet carrying the infant swathed in magnificent flowing robes, he trembled. It required no sage to name this child, John—little John—Madalina's child—his—

He glanced about with hesitating eyes, a good few were about; his colonel smoking and chatting with some gentlemen, and, yonder, mounting the staircase, in full view of the whole scene, the young lady he had lately danced with, laughing with his own captain; while about the numerous doorways lounged officials, waiters, and numerous guests.

"What do you want my lad?"
"Oi want Livetenant Da-lone-ey."

"I am he."

"Then ye're the gent; this ba-ba's fur ye."

"Me," he murmured, pale to the lips. He was almost beyond speech. Already he felt the questioning stare of the company—servants were gaping, ladies and gentlemen as they passed from room to room, or up the brilliantly-lighted staircase, were glancing curiously at the strange tableau. It

was an awful position.

"Who sent you?" he breathed painfully, and his eyes fastened on the large deep lettering on the infant's brow; then his glance wandered over the beautifully wrought robe, the soft gleam of the silken cloak did not escape him. Then one small finely formed little hand sprang up and out; the soft silken folds opened, and a little note pinned on the child's bosom was uncovered. He took it off, quickly recognising the writing, and crushed it into his palm unread.

A few groups had drawn a little nearer, strung to the

highest point of curiosity. Suddenly a slight withdrawal became evident, numerous onlookers retreated to the shelter of the doorways. A passage seemed to cleave itself right up to the great vestibule. Denny's mother, leaning on Lady Lyle's arm, came slowly forward. She had wearied, and asked Mab to go home with her. Mab, seeing the knot of people, wondered what was the matter, and the elder lady, noting her son's paleness, hastened forward.

"What is wrong, Denny? You look ill."

"Nothing, mother, thanks. I will join you immediately."

The lady looked round. The people about had a peculiar

expression.

Ned's eyes all this time devoured the "gran' ladies." He had never been so very near "gran' people" before. He half-regretted his dead Cissy was not present to see these ladies

in their splendour and their shine.

Lady Lyle was changing colours, growing hot and cold in rapid succession. That something had occurred there was no doubt, but what had the ragged boy to do with it, or what this child with the magnificent flowing robe, rich and costly enough to vie with her own? Denny looked at her beseechingly; she half grasped his entreaty.

"Mother, come, dear," she said, softly. "We shall catch

cold standing in the draught."

But Mrs. Deloney moved a step nearer. Her eyes, like her son's, like Mab's, fascinated by the white bundle in the ragged urchin's arms, with the little white hand dangling out. She had never heard of the child; her elder son in kindness had kept it from her; a curious oppressed feeling almost choked her.

She was a high-bred proud woman. It was humiliating to speak, but some instinct compelled her to. She bent forward

slightly toward the white bundle.

"What is this?"

Ned answered in his most polished Belfast lingo.

"Plaize mem, it's ba-aba; he's fur Livetenant Da-lone-ev."

The lady raised her eyes to seek her son's, a hot flush

suffusing her face to the very tips of her shell-shaped ears, but Denny for once could not brave his mother's gaze. All the bravado and nonchalance and devil-may-careness were sunk completely out of him. There was a mortification,

a degradation in this exposure beyond imagination. That peculiar feeling he had experienced once before came over

him so powerfully as to produce physical nausea.

Mrs. Deloney moved a step nearer Ned. She looked into the baby's exquisite face, so mobile, so rarely beautiful in contour and complexion, with smooth white brow daubed and marred by a name painfully legible, and at this moment painfully familiar: DENNY DELONEY.

This writing might mean such was the child's name, or it might be only an address. There could be no mistaking for whom it was intended. It was a strange group the waiters and servants and guests craning in the background; although pretending not to be looking, the young officer in pale weak horror, the elder lady in hot mortification, the younger one in pain, the arab-boy full of yearning love and kindliness

looking down upon the sleeping baby.

Mrs. Deloney drew back quickly, as if a sudden subtle arrow ran her through and through. The sight seemed to leave Denny's eyes. Mab, cold as ice, retained her composure, while over everybody stole a stolid conviction. At this moment the infant opened his large, black, glittering eyes. John looked round, smilingly, radiantly, the soft wreathing pleasure on the infant's face strangely incongruous to the scene.

There was a painful pause, then Lady Lyle asked Lieutenant Deloney to call their carriage, and Denny's own Colonel coming forward, gave Mrs. Deloney his arm; while Mab, with that rare ready aptitude of some women, took the infant in her arms, and followed quickly.

Ned, the arab, vexed in his deepest soul at parting with the child, turned on his heel as on a pivot and bolted through

the open door.

### CHAPTER XXI.

MOLLY passed into the streets like some one demented. A wild terrible sensation had overtaken her, nothing like it had ever swept her soul; a slice had been cut off her very heart. She felt the sharp keen blade of the knife the very moment the child left her arms, her quivering flesh crept, and a deep wordless cry broke into the cold night air. She hurried on, never pausing for breath until her strength gave out; that queer sustaining power had gone, the notion of revenge that supported her through the ordeal had died off, leaving her a poor, helpless, wrung-out rag. She looked about in despair; the Albert Memorial was at hand, and with an awful effort she reached the railing. She put her arms round it for support, and stood there with her bleeding heart in the cold bleak midnight. Her feet would go no further. Again and again they tried to go back, back to that scene of light and music and revelry, back for her child, to snuggle him into that place in her arms, into that hold in her heart. If only she could have him back, if only—if only—and her head fell forward upon the railings in a sheer exhaustion of agony and grief. Presently Ned came stealing by; he was meditating on the strange affair that had just occurred, sighing after the lovely baby that had lain in his arms a few minutes. Never had he looked at such a child; never had he felt such a thrill of pride as when the child lay against his poor half-covered breast. And those ladies, how grand they were-what clothes, what jewels-but the baby, the lovely child beat everything.

He was lost in his reflection as he came on to the Albert Memorial on his way to one of the big cannons on the Customs House steps; often he crept into one of these for a night's shelter. It was a curious bed, that big gun taken with such bravery at Sevastopol. The Clock struck; at the boom of the bell he looked up, there was Missus Angel

clasping the railing, white as a ghost.

"Missus Angel, Missus," and he shook her.

Molly was slowly coming round, presently she became aware of the lad.

"Where is he?" she gasped, "where's John?"
"The gran' lady tuk him, missus."

"Lady? But the gentleman was to have him." "Yis, but the lady all shining in silk tuk him."

"What have you done?" she cried. "You must go and

get him back. Run, get him back."

"Get him back, missus? Why the lady tuk him away in the gran' carriage. I saw them drive away like lightnin'."

Molly listened in dumb agony, her little vengeance had apparently not come off. Fate seemed to have saved him, and she had lost the child for nought.

"What did the gentleman do?"

"He did nothin', he jist axed me who sent me; then the ladies come down the hall, a young one and an old one; they looked at the ba-ba. Then the young one axed the lieutenant to call the carriage, and she tuk the chile, and they drove away. The livetenant and another sodjer man went back into the ball."

"Did the child cry?" she breathed, in a hungry way.

"No, he laughed, as if glad to go way the gran' lady into

the gran' carriage."

And Molly's bleeding heart got the final stab. She cried deep, desolate tears—tears that could never dry, tears that were to furrow for ever her whole life. She had wounded herself with a wound incurable; she had put off for ever the only solace, the only balm possible to her lost condition, the presence and pleasure of her little child.

"Ned," she cried, "don't leave me—this night—I'm desolate, my heart is—broken," and she held out her

empty arms to the poor street arab.

The boy's eyes filled with tears. He knew but too well what desolate meant, and the thought that Missus Angel wanted him to stay with her moved him strangely.

"Take me—somewhere," she said brokenly, "take me any-

where."

The boy looked at her doubtfully; he was not quite sure of

"I'm homeless," she said, brokenly; "where can—we—stay—till morning."

There was no doubt now. It was a shocker, but the street

boy was equal to the emergency.
"Come," he said kindly, "come I wis jist goin' miself," but he had to pass the cannons, understanding vaguely that

Molly could not creep in there.

He led her away down the quay-way, dodging the constables, dodging too the cold bitter night air that blew in cutting blasts off the lough by sheltering behind the huge "empties" lying about, and farther on behind the solid squares of coal built upon the quay-side. Behind one of these big coal squares the two crouched; every shed was shut, and there did not seem to be another spot.

The cold was intense, the wind was piercing and full of damp as it blew from the open sea; still the coal-square was a shelter from the open. Molly sat down, lifting her skirt, she folded it round herself and her poor shivering companionthus the first cruel hours crept by. Ned suffered fearfully; the cannon was nothing to this, but with the large heartedness of

comradeship he endured for his companion's sake.

Molly's tears felt thick and fast, verily such a tear-storm never burst over woman. Cold, desolation, shame, hunger, all were as naught compared with the awful heart yearn for her child, and there along the quayside she felt the leash the keener, because her own hand had dealt the blow, the irretrievable blow. She knew well it could never be undone. She felt within the deepest recesses of her soul that the child had passed from her for ever. That recoil at the shame of the infant passed from her in the deep maternal instinct of her being. Slowly crept those cold slow hours by, as all things, even the slow things, in this world creep. Nowhere in Belfast does morning come sooner than at the quay; steamers come reeking up the river, horns blow, lights flash, and there across the belt of water the myriad "Island" horns call thousands to their work. Fuss and tug and stir and stimulus of life had begun, the steamers were in port, longshore men shouted and hauled; ferries, to and from the Island, darted between the big incoming vessels; friends waiting to welcome friends cheered half-heartedly, for it was a bitingly cold damp morning that took the stomach out of everyone.

The coal-square could shelter these strange children of fortune no longer, big rough fellows were coming to their work at the coal shades; they had to go, both cold and stiff

and hungry, with not a copper between them. They moved on up the water-side, mingling among the people, trusting to the semi-dark to hide them. Molly looked at the gleaming water; it was tempting, a great avenue of escape from her trials; only for the Afterward she would have plunged into the cold, shining, lapping river, but that Afterward, that Afterward, held her in iron traces, as it has held every thinking mind since the world began.

As they mingled in the crowd Ned could have got odd jobs at carrying parcels, calling cars and cabs, and knocking among the people, but that sense of comradeship with Missus Angel, that feeling that he could not leave her held posses-

sion of him still.

As the morning opened Molly, full of cold, fatigue hunger, and gnawing remorse stood face to face with her position. It was a fearful one, and she was so hungry, so weak with exhaustion that she was afraid of sinking on the pavement.

She had the ruby ring upon her finger, and in her desperate strait it was solid comfort to know she could raise money on

it.

Ned led her up one of the adjacent streets to a pawnshop. They stood about shivering, waiting till it opened. At last it did open; for a few minutes she hesitated, then gathering her courage she went in.

The assistant looked at the ring, looked at her in his cute,

cool, calculating business way.
"How much?"

"How much?"

Five pounds."

He scribbled her name on a ticket, flung it to her, threw the gold down, and charged into the next box to attend to

another customer.

At sight of the gold Molly started violently; a spasm of memory caught her, with trembling fingers she took up the money, and went out.

### CHAPTER XXII.

LIEUTENANT DELONEY went back to the ballroom. He flung himself into the gaiety and pleasure going on, but in his eyes a latent fire smouldered. Presently, when the tingling oppressive sensation of the first moments had lessened, he took means to send for one of his private detectives, and saw him at the side entrance of the hall. He upbraided the man bitterly; the wrath and rage seething in him flew out without

quarter.

Why could he not trace the lady? She was in town, she had actually been at the hall within this last hour. Would he go now and follow her up—she could not be far off—bring her to my quarters, get her, hold her and he ground his teeth. He longed to go himself, to plunge about the city until he had her. Anger burned in him, deep liquid as fire, but he compelled himself to stay the whole night in the ball-room; this affair would be talked of all through town to-morrow, but he braved the night out lest anyone should think he ran away.

The detective went out. He was well on the scent, but lost it, for it never occurred to him to search down the open

quay-side for young Deloney's fancy.

The ball passed, the morning papers gushed it, but one young officer cursed it with a deep and cruel oath. The detective failed, and the day of departure opened dark and grim and hideous. He had intended going home for breakfast but the very idea gnashed his teeth; he told himself he did not care a curse about anyone only his mother. The expression of her face, the pain in her eyes were something to take to India, more penetrating than physical wounds; he felt he could never blot it from his sight, never forgive Madalina for such a deed. He took the little note and ground his heel into it fiercely, then he gathered it up and tried to read it; it was ruined hopelessly, he ground his heel upon it again, and finally kicked it into the fire. Then in spite of every-

thing, that deep aching longing, that wish for her that swept him like a hurricane came back, he crushed his face into his wrung hands with that every returning prayer-cry:

"Madalina, Madalina, Madalina."

The fuss and stir of the day bore him onward, the flying of messengers up and down the staircase, the beating of drums, the mustering of men, the confusion and din of a regiment leaving for foreign service, the last shaking hands, the final message, the sense of going came cramming into the last hour. Then the men were formed in the barrack-square, the order was given, the march to the quay began. The band played, the crowds cheered and cheered, drowning the very sounds of the music. A thick dense crowd surrounded the men, traffic was stopped, the trams, loaded waggons, outside cars came to a stand still, the din and shouts united into a roar.

There was great enthusiasm for these lads of the Brigade were mostly sons of the city, lads born and bred here who were leaving their native country for the first time. Now and again above the noise of the multitude the shrill cry of a child rose or the sobbing of a woman broke out; yet withal the babble and pressing throng the solid phalanx of soldiers

in the centre moved forward.

The crowds swelled at every street corner, cheers echoed and re-echoed, as it greeted the men it seemed as if the whole city had turned out. It was next to impossible to see anything save now and again as the crowd swayed, the vivid scarlet uniforms threw a flash of colour over the sombre, seething citizens. The band was playing that good old Irish tune: "The girl I left behind me."

And so amid the music and the screaming of children, the sobbing of women, the cheering of loyal hearts and proud as they looked at the brave sight their sons and brothers and

husbands made the Brigade reached the quay.

The excitement was intense, everyone struggled to the front, the harbour constables had their work cut out to keep the people back. Cheer upon cheer rang the air, hats and caps were waved, a rush was made as the gangways were put down, but the cordon of constables were prepared for this good fellowship from the regiment's friends.

Down the quay way a bit, half-hidden behind a huge crate of goods stood Molly, a thick shawl drawn half over her face.

She had come out purposely to see the soldiers off, she knew not what impulse goaded her, what deep suggestion of her soul, but she had come. The morning had been a busy one, lodgings to get, for she dare not go back to the old one without the infant, clothes to buy, work to look for, all had been done with a feverish haste lest she would miss this sight. She had resolved to keep little Ned with her for a little while at least, and out of her five sovereigns he had had the first new rig out he ever remembered wearing. She had left him just now in the little furnished room she had taken, to keep the fire in, and have the kettle boiling against her return; for be it known in these small furnished rooms the full routine of life, cooking, eating, sleeping, dressing is gone through.

The crush and cry of farewell had begun, rough hands clasped, big arms closed round little children in gentle tenderness, lips pressed lips, tears were mingled with tears, sobs half-choked those last words. Farewell! How full of invocation, to forgive those petty little things that ruffled pleasant hours, to remember plighted troth, to be true till death. Farewell! Farewell.

It was over, that last hand-grip, that last look into swimming eyes, the pain of rupture was at its keenest. The ship had its full freight, the gangways were withdrawn, the water was lashing up the quay side, a flock of smoke was rushing sky-ward, all eyes were on the troop-ship as she trembled in her first step, the flag of the regiment with its harp and crown flying.

The cheering clove the air, the pain intensified, the ship shook herself, the band played, the flags flapped upon the masts, the water splashed and spread into a fan of foam,

the vessel had moved away to that grand old air: "Rule Britannia. Britannia rules the waves."

It was a splendid sight, the ship making out into the open, anxious as it were to escape with her scarlet freight, her banners waving, her funnels smoking, the music rising from her like an anthem of the deep, half-blending, halfswallowing the deep sonorous human voices in a magnificent fanfare.

Molly watched it all, but her eyes were riveted upon Lieutenant Deloney as he stood upon the upper deck-way erect and handsome with uplifted helmet—for his elder prother and father were upon the quay-side. He knew not that her eyes were on him; in this last moment he had envied the men with their wives and sweethearts, the gentle wishes of a woman seemed to go with all but himself. She looked at him critically, she saw him as he had been in their first meeting, a handsome, gallant-looking soldier, all that had happened between them seemed to pass like a panorama before her eyes—the dream, the delight, the deceit, the disaster—but the ship was moving irresistibly away. Molly's eyes followed her as if fascinated until the unitorms of the men were all jumbled into a scarlet mass, away out there in the deep, dark waters of Garmoyle "where Lir's lonely daughter tells to the night-star her tale of woes."

"So," said she in the intensity of her thought speaking

aloud, "so sails my past into the ocean of oblivion."

The cheering and waving of handkerchiefs, the glamour and excitement were still going on, loving hearts could not leave while the very track of that vessel was in the water. One lady, young and handsome, had crept out to the very wateredge straining out to the open sea. As she turned to leave her eye caught Molly Bennett, in spite of shawl and surroundings, she was not deceived; she knew her well. A ray of light broke over her sad countenance, a beam of hope crept into her dark, wet eyes, her red lips opened, and she laughed low and long.

"He has left her behind, he has not taken her, that one

with the yellow hair, she has not beaten me yet."

And Lady Winnie went away glad.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

THAT same evening that the ship left Belfast, Molly sat in her little furnished room, a pen in her fingers, and paper before her. She was trembling, and well she might; she was writing quickly, intensely telling almost everything of the ups and downs of the last year, lifting the curtain, then dropping it before one's eye could grasp anything. It was a clever tellnothing, for not one syllable of the drama of her soul shadowed that letter, vet there were many details of the affairs in Sea View Cottage. She sealed and posted it in a sort of triumph.

"That letter," she breathed, "shall be in South Africa as soon as he is in India."

The first dawn of hope had come to her as she watched that ship sail from Belfast quay. He was free, leaving the city with the cheers of the whole city in his ears, at the other side he would be met with cheers while she stood in the wilderness of life alone and undone, vet free, free, he had passed out of her way; she need have no fear of him, she could walk forward untrammelled, and she remembered that she was voung and beautiful, and a struggling hope-germ came into her suffering bosom. So the days passed on and she went back to her old work with the seedlet in her heart. The winter came, terrible, full of rain and fog, the strain of the work upon her reduced constitution was severe, week by week it became harder and harder to put in the hours from six in the morning to breakfast time, then from breakfast to dinnertime, and the last stretch until six o'clock left her almost prostrate.

The dark, rainy, foggy days tried her most. On one such day Molly stood at her stand in a long large room where one hundred and fifty people, mostly women, were working hard. Overhead there is another room, the same size, and below and below again hundreds and hundreds earning daily bread: the machinery is flying; there is a continual roar not unlike a storm in deep seas, amid it now and again a coarse voice sings a snatch lustily, somebody laughs loudly, then the sonorous voice of the spinning master restores all to the normal peculiar noise. Molly is working busily; she is wearing a petticoat of coarse striped stuff, and a short cotton jacket, her throat rises out of the loose bodice like a tower of ivory, and her moulded arms are white and curved as a Phraxiteles marble. She is intensely pale, with that paleness of a dazzling lily as she leans over the flying bobbins, her rich yellow hair sparkles and shines like a nimbus in the dull,

misty gas-light.

The air is oppressive with the heat of the gas and flying machinery, the odour of sperm oil, and the breathings of the toilers. Molly tries to stifle her unpleasant sensitiveness to the smell, but it is choking and sickening beyond words. She is perspiring, yet her feet are cold as ice, and wet to the ankles. The floor about is swimming, on each side is a water trough through which the flax passes, and causes this discomfort. The shivers are creeping over her, but she braces herself and struggles on, only two hours to dinner time, her hands move deftly, and the machinery flies, and she holds out bravely.

She will get out five minutes earlier than the regular time, this is most unusual, but it had got wind through the mill that there was a "beauty" in the spinning-room, and the hands from the highest to the lowest had surged into the mill-yard in complete uproar. It was the same at every "mail-hour" and the manager had been compelled to adopt this plan.

This rumour of the spinner's beauty soon spread beyond the mill, until betimes the whole of the city seemed to be gathered outside the mill gate. \* The Press got wind of it, whole columns appeared in the local papers. The high and low, rich and poor, surged like a billow to get a glimpse of this famous face. To avoid a panic Molly was often smuggled out; ultimately this five minutes earlier was adopted. It seemed as if the girl's cup was never to be full; this terrible publicity galled her afresh, often and often the dark idea of the river flashed over her tortured brain, then the mad yearn for her child, the wild hope that somehow, someway God would bring him back, and yet—and yet—she could scarcely earn enough to keep herself; in some moments it was a relief to

<sup>\*</sup> Fact: The previous or following incidents of this work have no connection with this item of local history,

feel sure, and she felt sure in that strange instinctive maternal

way that little John was well looked after.

Her suffering was extreme, not so much the work with its early rising and long hours, but the coarse looks, the rudeness, the mad rush of the crowd to gape at her were very hard to bear. Only want, sheer desperate, gnawing want, compelled her to face it. The rent had to be earned, and other necessaries, and she must spin. So spin she did, well and truly until this day when she is rapidly approaching physical collapse. The roar of the machinery grew louder, the flash of the spindles like lightning, the terrible smell more choking, the perspiration began to drip off her, a queer shiver crept up her spine and over her head; she fell. There was a quick realisation of what had occurred, it flew about from haud to hand that "Beauty" had fainted. Willing hands were not wanting to do all they could, and when she came to a little the spinning master gave her a pass out.

She went to her little lodging slowly and laboriously, feeling wretched and utterly unfit. Ned the arab was still with her, he had been out all the morning with papers, now he was home in the room busy tidying up before dinner time. The sick look of Missus Angel staggered him, it reminded him some-

how of the look of little dead Cissy.

She was broken up and the dispensary doctor had to be brought, for days she lay helpless with only the street-boy for nurse, and only the little he earned coming in. She was practically penniless, the rent could not be paid, nothing could be paid, somehow the true state of affairs got wind in the mill. Sympathy, true sympathy was there, not the barren "very sorry" every day sort. The Irish poor warm to need and divide their last sixpence, ave even a beggar has been known with true magnanimity to share her luxurious farthing's worth of snuff with another beggar. When pay-day came a collection was made, everyone gave right over the whole mill, and on the Saturday afternoon a deputation came to visit Molly with shiny silver fingers.

She was in bed, utterly prostrate both in mind and body. Her landlady ushered in the mill-hands. The women spoke feelingly and kindly, and emptied a heap of silver on the counterpane before her. Molly grew red to the very brow with a pained redness that had never burned there before. It brought her poverty very distinctly before her eves, it laid

her pride in the very dust. Had it come to this! an object of charity, that those requiring help themselves had divided their sweat-earned wages lest she should starve. A spasm passed over her features, she put her fingers over her eyes to hide the scalding tears, no humiliation was ever tainted like this. Her poverty had gone beyond herself, yet she was not blind to the kindness of the act, but it cut her to the quick to have to take it, nay to be thankful for it, and glad to get it. Inexorable necessity decides the actions of both

the illustrious and the lowly.

If it had not come there seemed no alternative but the Infirmary. When the deputation had gone she sat up in bed, her hands full of the money, somehow the sight of it—so much loose silver and coppers—recalled some memory of money. She had felt the same memory that morning when the pawnbroker's assistant threw the five sovereigns to her. What was it? What notion of money in great uncounted quantities hung about her mind, yet would not definitize? The sensation grew upon her, yet she could not recall where or when she had seen and felt with her fingers money in great loose lots like this, only it was gold, she was quite sure of that, it was yellow, brass-like, dim, gold.

But affairs were pressing; she sent for her landlady and paid the rent. Then Ned the arab with a joyous heart went out at full speed for sausages, his favourite dish, to make a good substantial meal. Molly's immediate distress being relieved, for it had been a great torture where rent and food were to come from, began to improve; her mind constantly went back to that strange peculiar notion about the gold, but all was darkness and she could recall nothing, only a haunting oppressive sense of loose gold in great quantities. She struggled with the past, she raked in its dead ashes, but to no purpose, somehow this money seemed disjointed, unconnected from her own immediate life, yet her hands had been in it, and she recalled dimly having the pulsation that it was hers.

The sense of search never left her night or day, her mind strove and struggled and wearied itself vainly, feeling after the location of the gold. So it went on until jaded and exhausted with the thought she determined to abandon it and began to think of Crawford; to wonder if her letter had reached him, to count the days until his reply would arrive.

That very night she dreamt they were children again playing on the mountain side, and that he left her home to the old cabin door. It was curious, but that dream made the hazy memory of the money clear. With the image of the old mud cabin in her mind, rushed over her the forgotten incident of the fallen wall, the old blue stocking with its lining of gold; that day with him, so strangely sweet, so bitterly false, that day when the deceiving light flooded her suffering heart, to show her the tantalizing happiness that could never be hers, yet she had believed that happiness in her very hand, and life had turned to radiance, radiance that when faded made him blacker and guiltier. The girl's brow darkened and lowered, but then remembering that she had turned from the past for ever, her heart took courage; her hope looked up; all this was gone for ever, and new strength awoke at the thought of the buried treasure. She remembered the very spot she put it in; the little hole scraped out with the ferrule of the parasol, the bramble roses trailed across the loose lumps of earth. Her pulses throbbed, she crossed to the little window of her room and looked out, she would go to-day, it was a fine, frosty day; but no, Acd was out with his papers; he would be busy back and forward the entire day, this being Saturday; somehow she leaded on the lad and dreaded the long journey up the old remiliar Shankhill alone.

But to-morrow's morn they would go; the lad would help her to remove the big lumps of clay, and then the heavy stocking with its gold and gold and gold. The blood cushed through her veins, excitement lit up her countenance; a new impetus touched every fibre of her being. The thought of shaking off poverty, of getting away from the tyrangy of the mill, of flying beyond the gaping, staring crowds, was something to raise the spirits of the poor heart-broken girl. The craving to go, there and then, had to be overcome; o co a cloud of doubt passed over her that it had been all a dream; vet no, it could not be; she remembered too well her soiled hands and the hiding of it under the bramble trees in her grand-father's old cabin. But if it were not there she would write to Willie; she would ask him plainly and openly to help her; it would be hard, yet it would be easy compared to the taking of that charity from those poor mill-hands; the

memory of that was gall, but bitterer than gall was the certain

knowledge that but for it-the Workhouse.

The Sunday morning came, soft and clear and beautiful; Molly was early astir, not a sound broke the silence, the sacred day had wound its hush around nature and around man and his concerns. Business murnours were still; the clangs of hamners silent; the roar of the mills quiet as a child in sleep; the big ships in harbour had cast anchor, and the belching funnels ceased. The great tension of life was slackened and nature joined as it were in the wide-spread cessation.

How exceedingly quiet it was, not even an echo of a passing foot broke the silence; Molly noticed the silence as she went about getting breakfant, and going over to the window she saw that the world was in snow. It was shining; it was sparkling; it was glorious; white as angel's wings even in the city's back street. Royal Winter had put on his beautiful garments, a great event was nearing, the passing of the year. Oh, that over our passing, so silent, so pure a veil may fall, that the crystal whiteness of God's oblivion may fall upon the incongruities of the life slipping away.

"The snow," murmured Molly, "it is the snow," and going over to the lad's couch she awoke him as if it were something alluring and fine to see. They are their breakfast in almost silence; Ned not daring to ask whither they were going or for what; she, too full of trembling hope and

darkening doubt to talk.

It was quite early, a fine frosty morning with the snow crisp and firm underfoot, and the sun shining in cool, bright splendour, far up in a clear, high sky. They crossed the intervening streets and made unto the large open thoroughfare of the Shankhill Road.

Silence reigned; the shops were shuttered; the road was deserted, and wound in sinuous torturous whiteness right up to the snowy mountains that rose up into the clear blue

atmosphere, white and bleak, but beautiful.

These strange pair kept their way steadily, right on past the old Shankhill grave-yard, where, not long before, people had to guard the graves of their loved ones with cocked pistols, up by St. Matthew's Church, whose round ceramic towers looked sickly against the shining fields of snow.

They went on quickly; the keen morning air freshening

and rousing the slumbering vigour in the young woman; but her own intense feelings were an artificial power that drove her onward like hidden electricity. Once as she paused for breath the fear flashed over her that this was folly, that she was self-deluded, that although the miser's stocking could not be found at his death, it was madness to hope that it would come to her after so many years. Her breath came in spasms at the doubt; she looked at herself, at the trusting boy who was following her, blindly toiling up the snowy, steep road, and the deep cry in her bosom almost burst out: "Let

me die rather than be disappointed."

But she nerved herself to go on, on to the bitter, or on to the sweet finish; surely the memory of that gold was too intense, too vivid, too definite to be other than real, and gathering her whole strength she spurted away from her own misgivings and fears, unconscious of the strain she was putting on herself, full only of an intense fire to know the certainty of this thing. Soon they came in sight of the lonely dismantled old ruins. The snow had banked itself deeper and higher inside the old place than upon the roadway, but the girl, in her excitement considered nothing; she dashed for the spot where the bramble branches heavy with the snow hung their heads. From under her shawl she brought out a fire shovel and began, while the lad began to rake with the poker which he had brought; these were all the articles they had or could think of in this eager journey to the old cabin. It was not easy shovelling the frozen, heavy snow, but nothing can withstand eager, swift enthusiasm, and soon the bare earth was visible.
"It's down—down there," said Molly, speaking to herself,

in a low, intense whisper; "I know it is, there, there, Ned;

try if you could wedge in the poker."

They knelt down, both poking with their fingers in the dry, hard clay, presently the poker was edged in and a little lump prized up, so they worked, breathless, speechless, now with their hands, now with poker, then pressing with their united strength the shovel into the frozen impossible earth. It seemed as if the earth had snapped her red jaws firmly over the old blue stocking, but as they worked deeper into the soil untouched by the frost, the work grew easier, and little broken lumps of clay began to be scattered about; the hole was growing deeper, and presently the old stocking. which was not buried deeply was exposed. Molly fell over it with a little cry, for a second she was barely conscious of life, a deep, unspeakable sensation came upon her, it seemed as if God the Great Supreme had given to her the impassioned desire of her innermost soul; her poverty, her humiliation before the crowds around the mill gate had gone for ever. God had helped her. God had saved. It was grand; it was unutterable, too deep for words, too sacred for human speech. She bowed her head in reverent Spiritworship; her soul seemed to go from her in adoring gratitude.

Ned spoke; he asked her what the thing was; she lifted up her face so full of light; she seemed again upon the threshold of life, eager, pulsating, brilliant, her dark flashing

eves full of radiance.

The lad saw the expression, the beautiful change upon her countenance.

"Missus," he whispered, "be like that always, that's what

ye were the day ye give me the half-sovran."

His voice, his remark recalled her, but the gladness in her bosom had come to stay, and her very soul sang as she lifted up the stocking.

"This is my grand-father's stocking; he was a miser, Ned,

and hid his money."

"Is it money?" asked the cute street-child."

She lifted it carefully and rolled it firmly in a corner of the dark shawl that was over her head. They set off homewards, the way was downhill, but they were both so clated that the feeling of weariness had vanished. As they turned down the bend of the road groups of young, rough fellows, who had come out to play "bullets" on this lonely stretch of road came in sight, but the lad and the girl passed on unmolested. As they came nearer to the town the bells of the churches began to ring, calling the worshippers to Holy Communion, the echoes and distant clangs floated up the hillway full of harmony and hope of Heaven. It was as the breath of angels as it swent up the clear, calm morning air. Molly's ears were attuned to hear, and the beautiful Master-message seemed to surround her. "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation."

Surely He had been acting for her in this wondrons -preserving-keeping of her grandfathr's money during these long years As she wended along to her humble lodgings her soul took to itself that higher and more beautiful solace than gold can give.

"Beheld I am with you all days, even to the consummation."
She had believed herself alone, alone, utterly adrift on life's path, but again and again the blending bells broke into her beating bosom:

"I am with you all days . . . . . . . . . . . . even to the consummation."

END OF PART II.



# PART III.

# CHAPTER I.

THE skies were blue as the hearts of harebells, the atmosphere clear as crystal—stars shining silver gleamed like gems in the magnificent sky. It was evening, wondrous, impalpable, glorious southern evening, such as England can never know.

Imagination herself pauses before the undreamed, unimaged splendour. The loneliness, the silence, the vivid colouring, the rugged symmetry, the vastness blend into a gigantic overpowering landscape that makes man feel is nitesimal. The moon glows like burnished silver; further of, hanging low in the sky, is the famous Southern Cross; the transparent air reveals the country for miles on every side. Right ahead is a line of hills, a degree darker in tone than the sapphire skies; blue mountains, beautiful to behold, to the lion-hearted grand to hunt in, for those hills are full of caverns and cataracts that house and water the girafies and hyenas, tigers, and lions.

The open country is a paradise, rich soft land, green and voluptuous, sprinkled with tall vivid flowers, whose purple and scarlet petals glow like particuloured stars in this eburnean hour. The jasper cactus stands solemn and motionless as a carved image in a face, peach trees and pine blossoms are growing about. Large white cattle are roaming in the slippy luxuriant grass. Away northward the scene changes; the naked eye can see the grass paling to faint yellow; a little beyond, it is as white as snow; further still it disappears, then the open earth gapes up; beyond is wild desolation without a leaf or shrub, an orange horizon, an orange sand-sea on whose fringe the ostrich struts.

Close at hand is a dark ugly lump of rock, some parts rise to eight feet, some fall as low as four, it takes a dark sinuous course into the open, blotching the green country for many miles. This ugly black strata is the most attractive thing on the African continent. It is the famous quartz of the Goldfields. Tall cranes, for heaving the quartz from the tunnels in the hearts of the rock, rude waggons, crude machinery for crushing, drills, sledge-hammers, picks, shovels, and various implements abound, telling their own story around the gaping

mouths of the big rock.

All about are wooden shanties, canvasses, kraals surrounded with strips of mealies, neglected patches of corn, and groves of gum trees exquisitively blue in the wonderful moonlight. Outside some of these little houses is the sullen scarlet of dying embers—cooking is a continual outdoor employment—making a bizarre tone in the surrounding lights; Kaffir women are trotting about, other women, mostly Dutch, are sitting by the door-cheek of their shanties busy sewing, a few children are playing round; groups of men are lolling on the sward chewing tobacco, smoking, playing cards, and talking idly. Some few are silent thinking of their prospects, of their native land, of the friends, parted perhaps to meet no more. Every nation seems represented, many of them fugitivies, who were glad to bury themselves in the mining camp. The Californian digger and the Australian, the Yankee swindler and the German thief, the Celt and the Saxon, the black and white, the bad and good jostle around the great gold-mine. A curious, throbbing, excited place is the mining camp, yet for all its tense feelingo and murmur, silence broods, as if the supreme stillness of the dark Continent were beyond disturbance. The mingling voices float away, the din sweeps by like a flying wind, and the Great Ouiet remains.

The dark unde figures of the natives, strong and large and massive, like bronzes of Hercules, make a startling contrast to the smaller white men in linens. Presently music is heard, not classical, but quaint; it comes very pleasantly to that strange gathering at the mine-mouth. It is only a concertina in a Dutch lad's hands, yet it has an enlivening effect upon all, especially the natives, and draws a crowd, much as it might at home on the street. The children clap their hands, and the clder people smoke on steadily, listening nevertheless attentively. Somebody begins a song, he is scarcely a good singer, but any singing is welcome, and the finish is lost in Kentish fire; everybody claps, the negroes who sit or stand slightly

apart, and are not supposed to hear at all, the loudest of all. In the heat of this a young stripling lounges up; he is very noble-looking in his bearing, that peculiar inbred stamp of breeding shows upon him. He is very handsome, with eyes black and brilliant, and features clear cut and firm, and his hair as black as a raven's wing. He is fresh and sweet in youth's own freshness and sweetness. He is mamediately pounced upon to sing, but he refused; he is very much used up, the day has been hot beyond cudarance, and disappointment has touched his keen ardent spirit. He is new to the place, being only here about a week, and as yet had not "tacked to." The muscular miners looked lightly on the slim, handsome, well-bred boy, and so he had not been engaged; the boy hinself felt like one dropped from the clouds into a rough set scarcely human.

They pressed him, and he had just sense enough to know it would not be wise to refuse these miners too far; although feeling wretched, he offered to recite. It was rather a novelty, and a hush dropped over them all; the men metched themselves in another position and smoked on in deeper silence; the women lifted their eyes from their seving to the tall handsome boy, whose clear melodious tones struck strangely

and sweetly on their ear:

"O France of noble country, O blood of high Bourbon."

His English had a taint of something not English, not displeasing, that rather lent a charm to his possionate repetition. The Kaffirs, who only half-understood, watched his kindling eye and white-featured face dubiously as he revealed the agony of the young wife dying crueily in the foreign court.

Crawford was lolting on the sward, his hands under his head, a pipe between his teeth, his gaze riveted on the youth; he did not hear the weird half-cry that depicts the last supreme moment of the young queen, his mind is filled to the easting out of all else with those white refined features; but the young fellow sits down amid a cheer that is half a roar; the youth passed his handkerchief across his brow, tossed back a few locks of dark satin hair, and rose again. The glamour of the thing had touched himself. It had been his dearest dream to go upon the stage, but circumstances had flung him into a wider arena than that of the theatre—here, under strange stars, before

a motley audience, some of whom would be the millionaires and multi-millionaires of the century, his debut was made.

Crawford watched him narrowly. The lad looked round the crowd with parted lips and glowing eye, praise was thrilling and delicious to his young soul. Then his gaze settled on the blue hills, so matchlessly beautiful in this opal darkness; but his mind went beyond those hills across seas to the vineyards and flushed fields of his sunny France. A sadness, a ring of longing flows through his voice; he, with his fine tastes and delicate cultured ways, longs with inexpressible yearning for his country and her delights and refinements and joys of life.

"For me sad stranger here, There is no resting place."

The lines were learned in his earliest boyhood, and they came to him at this moment as particularly appropriate. His little wail floats like a lost bird's cry over the rough unvarnished knot of men. The Kaffirs sought stealthily, their short knives stuck conveniently into the loose friable soil upon which they lay; they were not too sure of what was going on, and were half-afraid of some onslaught; their fierce eyes fire, their brawny arms stiffen on the rude handles of those coarse weapons; but no one stirred. Other sentiments were beating in the hearts of the white men. A breathless hush came over everyone. Those rough fellows felt their deepest feelings stir within them; they too, as much as the boy, were strangers here; home, old home, sweet home, only home was far away.

Crawford moved nearer to the lad; his features and style and bearing were not unknown to him. This stripling was the exact counterpart of the elegant debonair gentleman he had seen with Molly, and whose shadow had seemed to fall between them that hight they parted. He wondered was the boy from Belfast—was he of their family? That curious feeling that draws people in far off lands to one from their

own place made him go and speak.

The boy let himself out frankly. He was from Paris, he had come here to make his pile. Pile, on the lad's lips sounded funny. Crawford could have laughed, only the unlicked cub was so serious, believed so firmly what he said, that Crawford restrained himself on account of the lad's guilessness. He was a little surprised to hear he was of Paris; true, his accent was foreign, but his face was the face of that man at home.

"You are a Frenchman, then," he said lightly yet scarcely believing.

"Oh, born and bred," was the ready reply.

"You speak English very well."

The youth laughed. Many a weary hour he had been made con and con the English; his dear mother had insisted that he should learn English from his infancy. Already at his first plunge into life it was of use to him.

"You are an Englishman?" I presume.

"No, Irish—an Ülsterman."

"From Belfast?" queried the lad, looking up quickly.

Crawford nodded, and watched closely his young questioner. The lad's face grew white with a pained picture; his rich dark eyes fell from the blue air and blue hills. Belfast! Belfast was re-echoing in his ear. Every day, every night in his dreams distinctly and clearly he heard it. His mind ever wandered back to that dark sad moment when that name was forced as it were into his bosom, into his very life blood. For ever must it be associated with suffering, the fir 4 sharp suffering of his life, the first deep dark of early years. Here in this strange country he felt the terror of it, the pane of it, creeping into him with keen freshness. The sight of his home, the pretty little maison on the banks of the Seine, is in his eyes, the brilliant sun falling round in golden showers the dear familiar rooms so dainty and cosy with their pretty trifles and delicate perfumes. A shadow has fallen over it, a silence creeps, a silence severer to suffer than tumult. Where is it? The boy knows only too well. Upstairs, in a tiny boudoir, wasted to a skeleton, is his well-beloved, his dearest one, his mother. She has been to his whole life all, he to her young prime has been, all. They have been the whole world to one another, each evaded the shadow that neared, but it came on, it enveloped them. The mother felt it cutting her off from her beautiful boy, from out its cold dark depths her heart, full of its last love-yearn, struggled hard, the effort brings the damp perspiration upon her hands and face, but Nature obeys even in death the command of Love. Some name, some place is breathed into his very heart; to this very last moment it had been withheld, because the hope of recovery had lurked deep within her. Belfast! it was her death-gasp. Belfast! it was the hidden chord of suffering in the lad's soul ever since. His eyes grew wet remembering, for his heart pined, for that mother who slept in the land of the tricolour yet seemed to cry from her far grave, "Belfast!" He looked again to Crawford.

"Belfast is the linen centre of Ireland?"

" Ves "

"Were you in the linen trade?"

There was a slight pause. Then the French lad inquired quietly: "Have you heard of a firm 'L. and V. Deloney?'"

Crawford smoked on quietly, but his eyes were fastened on the boy. He was surprised, and not surprised, at the question. There was no doubt whatever that he had the face, of that man, that man whose very memory annoyed him.

"Yes," he returned slowly, "everybody in Belfast has heard

"Then it is a very large concern?"

"Very large."

"They are friends of my mother," explained the lad. was to join them after her death. but—"

The youth hesitated, then went on in a low tone: "They, I gather are rich; I am not. I did not care to go until I made a bid for fortune."

Crawford's eyes fell. He liked the lad's sentiments, but this fragile, tenderly nurtured boy, was not like one who could

better himself roughing it at a mining camp.

"The Deloneys," he remarked, pointedly, perhaps too pointedly for good breeding, "must be near relatives of

"By no means; friends only of mother, no blood."

"What!" said Crawford, with uplifted brows. Then he asked quietly, "are you quite sure?"

"Quite," was the decisive reply.

Crawford looked again over his face—the same features, the same easy high-bred look, the peculiar something that marks certain families, and is easily distinguishable. Yet, as he examined closely, he marked a difference, a steady look in the dark eyes, a reserved firmness that he failed to trace in the gay young lieutenant.

"You seem to me," returned the blunt Belfast boy, "to

resemble the Deloney family very strongly.

"Really," laughed the lad, "there is no such luck"

Years afterwards when the lad had come to man's estate, this, their first conversation, flashed clearly across the minds of both

Crawford said "Good-night." He hated to discredit the youth, yet his face, an indescribable something about himself, gave his words the lie, but the lad seemed frankness itself, and he could have no reason to disclaim the Deloneys to an absolute stranger like himself.

## CHAPTER II.

CRAWFORD dandered slowly outside the camp, thinking more or less of this corversation with the young stranger; but personal affairs were pressing, and his mind was full of expectancy and unrest. Presently he reached a little hillock; ascending it, he put his hands to his eyes, more from habit than necessity, for it was moonlight, and searched the prospect, straining hard. His strong eyes could see beyond the tall flowers and away to a dark ring of lofty mimosas so far off that they seemed to touch the limpid moon. The whole prospect was unbroken, the roadway that narrowed down into a rutted bridle path was silent and deserted. After another long and careful gaze he went back to camp and entered the canteen.

The canteen was a rough wooden shanty; the bar a few planks nailed together over which the drink passed; rude benches ran around, with here and there a turned-up empty box for a table. The place was full to overflowing, the men for the most past lying on the floor, their drink beside them, and the cards in the centre space. The gambling was excessive, sometimes going so far that the next day's crushings were staked, actually gamed before it was wrung out of

mother earth.

The heat, the smell of bad liquors, the babel of tongues—broken Dutch, bad English, bits of Kaffir, made it anything but a delightful retreat, but the miners had no place else to go, and the canteen did a roaring trade. Crawford looked round the excited animated throng; the person he sought was not present. As his eyes roved over the motley gathering a sense of loathesomeness caught him, the gambling dragon scened to grin up into his face: the canker and the gnaw at the gambler's heart sat on every face; here there was no reserve, no gloss on the rugged countenance watching every card, every fling of the dice. Earth, Heaven, and Hell were centred in a game. It is terrible to behold; one is glad to

withdraw, daunted, afraid, and unnerved. Crawford met the man he sought as he was leaving the canteen. They went out together.

"What do you think of it?" asked the newcomer before

Crawford had time to speak.

"Fair," was the short reply.

"Then you do not expect a large vein?"

"Well, scarcely. What is your own opinion?"

"Mine," with a depreciatory shrug, "is not formed. One day I am sure the vein is widening, the next it diminishes; I cannot decide."

"You blast to-night?"
"Yes, at twelve o'clock."

"Come round when it is over to my shanty; there are some

little things I want to discuss."

Crawford turned away abruptly. He went again to the little hillock, and stared to the rim of mimosas, his look fell after another piercing glance. The man he had just left was his overseer at the mine. He was not altogether satisfactory; something about him did not ring true, and Crawford was beginning to rue engaging him. In reality he had had more work and more worry since he came than before; the Kaffirs skulked more and stole oftener, and complaints poured in. But little matters of this kind are incidental to the work; what the successful miner dreaded was the secret undermining villainy that eats and sleeps and communes with you, until every intricate detail of your affairs is his own in a particular and definite sense. Many a fellow at the mines has been fleeced this way; Crawford was afraid his manager was angling with the same line. As he walked back to his own shanty he decided to take over the management himself. would have room for another hand, somewhat above an ordinary worker, but a much subordinate position to his present manager. His mind reverted to the French youth; he could do doubtless those many little things that needed the head rather than the hand. But that fateful likeness, that face that was the exact counterpart of his; he hated it, the very thought of it irritated him, and brought before his mind that Sunday night that had been as it were the dividing line between his bright unclouded early life and this strenuous exile and chequered career.

But it was not his way; it was against every principle of his

being to bring this up against the boy, who could not possibly have had any concern in it. Yet the thing revived strangely in the lad's presence, and seemed to jag him at the very core of his heart.

But is was unjust and ungenerous, and Crawford made a resolution to rise above it. Out here, wild and loose, he had done his best to be a man, to live up to that code he had imbibed or inherited at home, to treat another chap as a chap like himself, striving to win up, to do the square thing all round and tramp on nobody. So far, affairs had gone well with him, everything looked prosperous, only this wild uncertainty, this fearful silence, that first queer, unsatisfying letter of Molly's almost undone Utterly cut off from his old life, his mind fed on this girl at home. Night and morning his thoughts were of her their happy childhood, that scene in the gaol, their passionate farewell; her deep emotion at the moment of parting had borne him on through many a toil-worn disappointing hour. But this silence, this awful waiting-waiting-it had almost undone him, he was afraid it would affect his health. His servant was away at Cape Town on the offchance of a reply to his last letter. The time for his return was up, and the unrest and anxiety were tugging at his heart. Somehow he expected news, definite news. As the minutes passed a sort of presentiment possessed him; again and again his eyes, with their keen bright glitter, swept the wide, wide landscape, so silent, so clear, that the colouring of the flowers was discernible. Away in the misty distance he sees a speck. His eyes fix on it; in a few seconds the advancing movement is perceptible, nearer and nearer, galloping furiously the rider comes.

It is his man. That tense nervousness that consumes him, brings the perspiration out upon his brow, he feels and knows there is news. He went forward slowly to meet his servant; the rider came on, his naked shoulders black as ink, the greasy sweat boiling out of every pore. Out in the open he discarded the clothes the authorities compelled him to wear in the town; he had not spored himself, for he loved his master faithfully and truly, and well he might, for Crawford had saved his life. In the first days when Crawford was sheep-farming, out one day with a search-party after some sheep, Crawford found him maimed and dying at the bottom of a gorge into which he

had fallen. With the utmost difficulty he had rescued him, brought him under his own canvas, bathed his wounds, fed and tended him until he was well again. The Kaffir loved him for it. His own people would have let him perish or become a prey to the wild beasts, but this white man gave him his life, and in return he did all that he could for him. Crawford found him invaluable; his knowledge of the country, his fidelity alone were worth a fortune. On an errand, especially this one, which he knew was of some importance to his master, the faithful creature scarcely drew rein the whole way. He had gone the same message before, but never with the same result. His massa would be glad, and faster and faster had the pony flown, sending the loose soil high into the air. His eye caught Crawford standing in the moonlight with the camp behind, and he gave one of those low cries peculiar to his people when they are joyful. Crawford knew he brought some message; his pulses throbbed, his face changed colours, and a sort of tremor seized him.

The Kaffir flung himself off, and leaped forward, but he was more exhausted than he thought; his wide chest heaved, his breath came in gasps, and he fell prone, unable to speak.

"God bless you, Klass, my faithful boy."

The negro's big hot eyes were on his face, full of tenderness and devotion. Such words were more than reward for that long hard ride. God was the white man's great Spirit; his massa so good and true spoke to God for him, the poor black. He valued it more than anything else under the sun, perhaps his estimate was the highest.

"Massa, it—it."

He pointed to the saddle bags across the snorting pony. Crawford opened the bag, and there—not one, but two of the long-looked-for letters were. The big strong man trembled, his face went pale under its tan when he saw the writing was Molly's own. He broke the envelope out there where he stood under the blue skies with his slave at his feet, and the pony shaking her wet mane. That letter with so much in it, and so little, had missed mail, so was not in Cape Town on Klaas' last visit. It had lain in the hotel ever since; so her later one and it arrived together. By one of those strange chances Crawford opened the later one first.

There was no preamble, merely a line saying she was coming, when this reached him she would be well on the way. He

stood like one transfixed. It had come at last, the fate he had longed and agonised for every hour was carrying her nearer and nearer. He felt spell-bound, unable to realise the happiness at his door. He failed to notice there was no mention of their engagement, no love message; everything was swallowed up in the joy of her coming. Tears welled to his eyes, a choking rose in his throat, the long hard work, the distance, the silence of the wearying months seemed but a day, so great was the love he bore her.

He stood perfectly still, almost pulseless in deep emotion; certainty was here, the written assurance was in his hand,

Molly was coming.
"Good, massa?" asked the negro, looking up at him.

"Yes," breathed the rough miner huskily, and he put his hand up to his eyes to cover the tears of joy that wet his sun-

dved cheeks.

Presently he opened the other letter, the first definite item that come home to him was Mr. Huntley's death. It was an unexpected blow. It had been one of his dearest secret hopes to hold some day his late manager's hand to thank him under changed circumstances for his deep kindness-but never now. Their little friendship was closed for ever; it belonged, with its tacit and sweet memories, to the Past. Another death-Phil, her father, was gone—the home broken up, the children in an orphanage, she herself was back to town.

He trembled at the news; his beautiful Molly friendless and alone in big Bolfast. His heart beat with relief that she was

coming.

"Thank God," he breathed, "thank God."

He went back to his shorty, there were many arrangements to make in connection with his work. His mind reverted to the French lad, it was absolutely necessary now that some one came on in his absence. The lad was raw, but there was not another white hand upengaged in the settlement, he must take the boy on at once. He would try to be absent the very "Once married," and the blood shortest possible period. coursed quicker through his veins at the thought, he would put himself to his work with the very fullest determination. He wanted wealth, he was already fairly rich, but he longed for the sweet delicious sensation of money, to feel free for ever from the craze, the unrest, the worry of the gold fever. It had entered into his blood; day and night that insatiable thirst burned, the constant stretching out till the morrow, the Golden Morrow that was to lay its millions at his feet, tested his full strength. But it would come, his quartz was already yielding heavy dust, and soon, he knew not how soon, the greater vield would come.

Ever and again as he lost himself in the gold dream, the thought of Molly, his beloved beautiful, would spur him on. This gold seemed to get its value in connection with her; he wanted it for her, and now she was coming to him-coming,

coming.

He went at once and sought the young stranger-lad. drew the youth apart, and explained briefly his duty, impressing him with its onerousness during his absence. They did not talk long, and when the manager was sent for he tried to make a scene, the arrangement did not please him.

"Who's boss?" he asked sullenly.

"It is my place he takes," returned Crawford.
"Then I give in my gun," was the retort, "no baby will

boss me."

"As you please," answered the Belfast Boy without wincing; but it was a matter of some concern to have his manager withdraw, although scarcely a good man, on the eve of his own absence. The man knew he was taking him at a short; Crawford met the emergency like a man.
"My lad," he said, "the more depends on you, be faithful

to me, and I will be faithful to you."

"Have no fear," returned the stripling, and he held out his

hand. "You honour me, a stranger, too much."

The miner called out his whole gang, and duly installed the French youth as manager. Next morning in the first cool the Belfast Boy and his Kaffir Klass galloped off at full speed for Cape Town.

### CHAPTER III.

THE ocean greyhound bearing Molly to Cape Town was plunging through the deep, heavy seas. Great Ocean! great image of the Infinite! too immense for mind, too large for sight, too old for memory, ever beautiful, ever changing hue and tone, sound and silence, yet marked amid every varying tableau with an eternal changelessness peculiar to yourself alone. Now sapphire, now jasper rimmed with pearls, yonder at the horizon yellow as gold.

Molly is on deck, looking in delight and wonder at the greatness of the beautiful, mysterious ocean. The bits of the sea that she had known at home were as pools compared

to this splendour that spread on all sides.

The air is sultry, the sky molten blue, not a cloud, not a speck, not a breath above, beneath a sheet of jasper, singing in soft cadences, higher, finer, sweeter than any human composers have yet created. Between the glories of the heavens and the seas, to the matchless, magnificent song of

the untamed deep, the good ship sailed on.

Presently some passengers come about, and soon a little group surrounded Molly, whose beauty has gone the round of the whole ship. To-day she is dressed in white and wearing a large brimmed hat to shade the sun; her hair, coiled low, peeps beneath, yellow as the sun himself. She is delicate-looking, but it only makes her wonderful beauty the more dazzling. It was curious that the conversation drifted to that strange old, yet ever-fascinating affair of men and women—love.

"In real everyday life," said Molly, "there is no such

thing."

No one agreed with her, but they listened curiously to the

decided views that dropped from her beautiful lips.

"Love is a myth—a beautiful ideal—a rarely indescribably beautiful one. The whole world would be poorer without that myth, but still it is nothing more. We start life looking

forward to it as if it is a real something we can have and hold and delight in, but time shows us how very mythical is our dear, sweet delusion."

"Now Time," ventured one of her hearers, "has not had much chance to show you."

Molly laughed. Had they known, it was but forced laughter. Those strange sentiments had been learned, and could be learned only in the school of experience. She drew off her gloves demurely, withdrawing from the ensuing conversation, and a flash of fire leapt into the sunshine; it was the ruby heart restored to its place upon her finger. She had worn it all the way to Cape Town; she was going with a calmed heart, with a stilled spirit, to a new land and a new life; not a married life, she told herself, but to push her way among strangers and beyond the influence of the past. She intended to go as governess in some wealthy settler's family. Crawford would help her to such a situation. To him she meant to be very explicit; nothing would be hidden, every detail would be revealed, then he would understand why she sought his help, why she came to this new, strange land.

Behind, in Belfast, there were none to care whither she went save the arab boy. She had dealt generously with him, well knowing that in the hard time he had been generous of his faith and trust and love to her. He was safely housed with a poor minister in the West of Ireland; arrangements had been made that he was to remain there to be educated until fit to begin business again on his own. Molly put one hundred pounds in the bank to make it possible for him to do so. Poor lad; when he understood these advantages were to cut him off from Missus Angel he wept bitterly. He almost felt that they were too dear at the price, but later in life he blessed God for Missus Angel; she was only a woman, but to him she played an angel's part, and ever after in his mind she was associated with his ideal of Beauty, Charity, and Love.

Her own child, the little John, she ascertained through an attorney was at Deloney Hall. He explained to her the difficulty and publicity it would entail to have him back. He suggested to her to let things remain, especially as the child was well looked after and treated as one of the family. She was compelled to yield, for every nerve winced before

that hell on earth—publicity—, but that yearn, that hearthunger, that queer, indescribable craving, how was she to bear it. She had told herself now that she had some means and was going to a foreign land, she would get him back, and be content, but the legal mind made her understand it would not be an easy matter, and might not be a successful undertaking. She saw that it was best to let things be as they were, and with a great effort she strove to go from that craving, to evade and to forget it; the little, dear hope of having the child was cut off, and for the rest she must forget. As far as it was possible she did forget. Her little sisters, who had been put in the orphanage, had both succumbed to an epidemic of whooping-cough that decimated the establishment; her step-mother had left the big milliner's shop to start house-keeping over again with a good blacksmith, so there were no close ties to sever when she set sail for South Africa. She came on board with a glad heart; she was thankful and grateful to God for opening the way to other sights and scenes.

Somehow "old things had passed away, all things had become new;" her spirits revived and her heart crept back

somewhere near its old normal position.

The ship trod on until the days became intolerably hot and nights intolerably cold, yet neither heat nor cold retarded the

ship-queen of the sea.

To Molly the voyage was exceedingly pleasant; she shared none of the other passengers' anxiety to be there. This rambling over the ocean, so free, so calm, so glorious, was delightful; she half-wished it might go on for ever, it seemed a prelude to the rest of her life, sweet, beautiful, endearing.

But the rush of every wave brought them nearer and nearer land, and soon the horizon was broken by a thin dark bar; it was the first dim outlines of South Africa. A thrill ran through the ship; it was grand to have reached safely the desired haven, to have braved successfully so many leagues of water. Next day the tablelands of Cape Town were visible, presently the ship was in the breakers of the Bay, slowing and slowing as she neared the anchorage. Cheers rose from those on the quayside and from those on board, great, deep, cheering from gladdened hearts. Surely it was worth a cheer, that triumphant sea-ride from shore to shore. A great crowd of passengers were on deck, Molly hid behind

a group of others, standing very still, she was looking out nevertheless, searching the shore-crowd for her friend.

Presently she saw him. He was easily seen; his tall, big, brawny figure could not be suppressed. She looked at him closely—really, although she might not have guessed it, comparing him with Deloney. She noted every detail of his dress, his rough grey tweed suit, the silk handkerchief knotted round his neck, the light grey wide-brimmed hat, but above all, she seemed to see for the first time in her life the man himself. He was tanned inch deep, but nothing could obliterate the manly dignity, the strength, the reliance of that face; his whole person and bearing seemed to breathe of high yet rugged nobility, an untainted sincerity, strong, immovable and true. This was the man who had loved her from her earliest years, was hers in bond and soul, who expected her to become his wife.

A mist like Cimmerian darkness rose in her eyes, a horrible heart-grip caught her, a cry half escaped her, for that awful terrible thought had come: "WHAT MIGHT HAVE

BEEN.'

She wavered in the awfulness of her emotion from her hiding place. Crawford's keen seeking e.e caught her at once; the waving of his hat warned her that he had seen her. She replied with her handkerchief, but the heart within her had sickened. The lightsomeness and buoyancy that had been with her so constantly throughout the voyage withered. A tremor, a terrible tremor to some women, shook her from head to foot. Love stung her heart-pulses again, Love, blind Love.

Presently the young miner rushed on board. Her lips were ashen, her pulses throbless, she half fell into his open

arms.

"Molly," he breathed simply, his whole welcome, merged as it were into the expression he put into that beloved name.

She made no response, but hid her face a moment on his broad chest.

### CHAPTER IV.

THAT first evening! those first moments alone with him, utterly alone in a new land with not a soul she knew on the whole continent, the very stars looked queer and the landscape so unfamiliar to her Ulster eyes. Everything strange, even the flowers with their brilliant scentless blooms; but one thing was not new, not strange—the love, speaking, beaming in the countenance of her lover; she knew that she saw it with a keenness of vision, with an insight more piercing than What was she to do? Rather, how was she the Socrates. to do it, for she knew well what to do; what it was right to do. But it was terrible, it was hell. Yet her own hand must open the door, the closed door of those years; her own hand must point all out to him. Oh God, if only she had the child, the child she thrust from her, her lips need never have opened, he would have seen, he would have understood. Now here she stood, the same in his eyes as of yore, even perhaps more passionately loved on account of their separation than in the old days at home, but if that had only been all, if, if— But Self, old selfish, greedy self wanted him, loved him deeply, really, unmistakably. Everything he craved from her in their long walks up Shankhill was his out here in South Africa. But she cannot have him, she cannot; and the agony tore her, the agony of love, regret, despair, helplessness, as the withering consciousness of her past stood before When he took her in his arms before they parted for the night his lips opened in a deep, tense whisper; those lips of his, that found it such difficulty to speak, breathed some deep words into her ear. She shivered and tried to draw away, but his arms were round her, his eyes lit like very stars gazing into hers. What would she not have given to be able to nestle toward him, to lay her head upon his bosom, but she dare not. She tried to hold aloof. ashen lips opened, but no words came; her voice seemed to refuse to utter the fearful truth, the black past would not

rise off her tongue. She stood there dumb, her poor human lips could not undeceive the man who loved her and whom she loved herself. It was a crime; quite well she knew that, yet love, that irresistible, unconquerable governor of humanity, sweeps every soul before him. She was very human under love's influence.

In her weakness, in her extremity, she tried to pray for strength to give him up, for courage to tell him, It would be a wound to both of them, deep and mortifying, yet she felt

it was the right.

Opening her Bible for direction, these words looked ap at

her:—

"A man shall be as a hiding place from the wind, as a

covert from the tempest."

Her hungry heart read it, the deep love surging through her read it, as it wished to read it; a sense of joy swelled in her; to her excited eyes it was as if God meant her to take this man as her hiding place—surely the winds had blown and beaten on her long and fiercely. God of Mercy was Himself pointing out her path, her sheltered path. It was true; God meant her to go forward, but not under false colours. Her duty was to clear up everything; she shirtest it because it was easier to her proud spirit to die than to lift the veil that screened the dark. Hard though it would have been and bitter, it never would have had the sting, the bitterness of later years when another hand drew back the curtain.

"Let the dead past bury its dead," she cried, shutting the book, her tottering nerve steadied and decided. She married in silence. Oh that silence, that narrow, selfish, criminal silence, its pettiness, its shallowness, its sin cost her more

than tongue can tell.

They lingered a day or two around Cape Town seeing the strangeness of the colonial town, the statue of Grey, and looking into the huge library, then the only sights of Cape Town, except, of course, the great, unspoiled, unbuilt-up

scenery sweeping round in lavish magnificence.

They had much to talk about—the many changes that had taken place at home, Mr. Huntley's sudden death, the tardy recognition from Sir Percy Lyle, her father's death, the break-up of the home, the death of the children in the orphanage, her stepmother's second marriage, and last of all the finding of her grandfather's old money-stocking.

As Molly talked of these things she was surprised at herself, at the clear delicate handling of truth that evaded, nay that almost eclipsed everything she desired to have eclipsed. Her listener had few questions; he was content and satisfied with what she tendered. A doubt, or shadow of doubt never crossed his mind. He had told himself that when they were married he would ask of Deloney, but now that they were married he did not care, and a strange reluctance to name that name held him.

Molly's heart beat evenly, she knew and felt herself safe in a good man's love, in a good man's name; she resolutely turned her face forward, determined to be in very truth

worthy the good fate that God had sent.

Presently they had to go up-country; those delightful climbs up the tableland and those glorious visions out to the Southern Ocean, and their long, quiet danders in the shady colonnades of Cape Town had to be given up. Crawford bore her off in triumph, home to his little wooden shanty beside the long dark ridges of rich quartz, so different from the home he had dreamed of in old Belfast; yet he was happy, he had not a wish ungratified now that Molly was come, now that she was his very own. He lingered about her anticipating her every wish in those honeymoon days, like some doting parent lingering about a darling only child. It was a delightful experience, that rugged jolt-ride up miles and miles of new country in a rude waggon, betimes getting out and trying to ride; her heart was happy, content beside her husband; earth had changed to Eden, her soul was uplifted within her.

Crawford's gang and the camp in general turned out to give them a welcome. Klaas, who had ridden on before to see that things were squared up and to give the news, sounded the bride's praises through the entire settlement.

Truly the rude son of Africa had never seen a woman so white, so beautiful, with such gorgeous hair as this wife of his master. When he first saw her he dropped on his knee and gazed up at her as if she were a creature newly fallen from Heaven. She became to the poor, uncultivated savage half-sacred; a sort of awe inspired every notion concerning his master's beautiful bride.

The mining camp spread itself in the evening cool, and as they neared, a little flutter of excitement was noticeable. Women sported bits of faded ribbon, the little children newwashed pmafores, the miners themselves had domed their Sunday best—a compliment that Crawford understood and appreciated. Another compliment was a big strip of green muslin nailed to the branches of two trees and heid by two powerful men under which the Beltast Boy and his bride passed. It was a rude attempt at an Irish banner, but the feeling that prompted it was sincere, and Crawford felt pleased and honoured. Inside the banner his own workers stood foremost, the young French lad at their nead, his tall lithe figure, his handsome face in strange contrast to the rough miners and the tall, half-clad negroes.

Crawford got off his horse and walked beside his wife, the better to sustain her entering the camp. The whole crowd cheered and waved their hats, the patives leapt and shouted

wild with joy.

Molly kept her head bent at the first thunderous applause. Presently she peeped up shyly at the strange gathering. Ah! what had happened, the heart within her tightened, her eyes stood in her head. Surely she was mad, surely her brain had conjured up that face. Whose was it? Where—where was she? Surely with Crawford in South Africa, surely far, far away from —. Oh, God; was this his spectre come to haunt her out here in the very wilds of the world?

The pony ambled on slowly. Molly's consciousness was about gone, but the rude, loud cheering brought her to. She strove against the terrible sensation, she looked in startled fear toward her husband; yes, he was beside her, he was

her husband.

Yes, but the giddiness, the terrible fear, the awfulness of the idea withered her, her head fell upon her breast in a dead faint.

The crowd gathered round, they threw water on her, forced brandy through her white lips, but the woman heart deep within her, half-wished to die, to escape for ever the fear, the torment, the horror that had risen up before her eyes.

When she came to, her husband was bending over her in anxiety, and the young French stripling chafing her hands briskly. Molly's eyes fastened on him, she saw everything that could be seen in that deep, all-searching glance. This lad was not—but who was he? What frightful Nemesis had settled him in this mining camp?

Her husband introduced her briefly, and the lad with the gallantry that was native to him, litted her hand to his lips, murmuring some happy wish in his soft, well-modulated tones. Crawford wondered did the strange resemblance strike her, but the miners were pressing round with their hearty hands and loud, good-humoured welcome. Then came the feast, the eternal roast-beef and fowl of South Africa, brown bread and beer.

They danced out on the sward to the strains of the concertina, the French lad contributing much to the entertainment. Molly herself sang, and being asked for something

Irish gave that old song, "Kathleen Mayourneen."

The singing and dancing and health-drinking went on merrily, and by and by, when the dawn was coming, Crawford and his wife slipped away, and the little shanty door closed upon them.

It was a far different home to what he had dreamed of bringing her to, but as Molly glanced about with a laugh, he whichered: "By any by dear you shall have a castle?"

whispered: "By any by, dear, you shall have a castle."
"I am satisfied," was her low reply, and as he looked into

her love-lit eyes, he knew she spoke truthfully.

# CHAPTER V.

THE days and weeks rolled pleasantly in, a long continued calm of peace and love; no break, no jar in the far away untransmelled life about the mines. Molly's every wish and thought clustered round her husband, in those pretty womanly unofficious ways she made him conscious of her love, of her presence, of her care for him. Their attachment was a bye-word among the camp, experienced married folk said it was too good to last, others that they were new fangled with each other, that it would pass away with the wear and tear of time.

But the Crawfords lived their simple lives, unlieedful of those side remarks. In the hot evenings, when it was too hot to ride out across the open as they enjoyed doing, the young husband would throw himself at the shanty door, while the young wife sat out sewing and humming into his ears some old home lilt that they both knew. So the first year of their married life went in, without society, without fashion, in a sense without civilisation, all in all to each other, neither having a wish beyond the other, the only stranger who here them company an odd time was Louis Lamont. But Molly did not care for him, and kept him off as much as courtesy permitted. In the mines Crawford and he were much associated, but for that Molly would have cut him dead. She saw with her unerring eve that day by day as the youth neared manhood the likeness deepened, at times his voice seemed to assume the very accents of Deloney. She had never spoken of this resemblance to her husband, nor had be to her; he was absorbed in his work, and his constant intercourse with Lamont familiarized and blunted the first strong impression. Crawford was very rich now, but he toiled on at the mines. The insatiable thirst was hot within him: the richer he became the richer he wanted to be. One evening he came in earlier than usual; their Kaffir woman was making brown bread, Molly was sitting on a low chair

near the window. She looked up pleased at her husband's entrance and noticed the repressed excitement in his eye. He came and leaned over her chair, a homely comfortably affair he had made himself; she saw he was excited.

"Molly, I shall soon be the richest man in the Colony." She looked into his face beaming, that kindling smile that illumined her whole features broke out as sne grasped his

meaning.
"Yes," resumed the miner, "the quartz is richer than

"Oh, Willie."

"It's pretty big."

"I'm so glad," she murmured.

"My first congratulations," he replied, pleased. There was a slight pause, then he got a skin rug and lav down at her feet.

"I must go to the bank very soon," he resumed, "When this yield gets wind there shall be many offers to me. Shall

I sell my claim?"

"Would it bring much?" she asked pointedly.

"Yes, I am sure it would," he returned thoughtfully, but yet I love it; it would be hard on me to part it. think I'll hold on; later on I can float a company."

"If you sell," returned his wife, "you have your money

without further work or outlay."

"True," he returned thoughtfully.

It was his habit to talk to his wife so. He had a great reverence for her education; her clear eyes had often seen the solution of many a difficulty. They sat together many a night, studying charts and drafts of the Goldfields. She pointed out many a trifling detail that his larger, more comprehensive view would have passed, and which in passing he would have passed wealth. They had thus pleasant communion, the aim of one being the hope of both, their dual life merged into one deep, throbbing stream.

He decided to work his claim a while longer, then to sell, and throw up his can and have a good time. He was looking forward to that time, much as a school boy looks forward

to holidays.

He had occasion to go to town shortly after this and took his wife with him. He was very careful of her just now, the climate told on her enfeebled condition-her cheek was pale, and the blue veins shone through her white skin. The inconveniences of camp life are bearable in health, but once that boon wavers the little accessories and comforts of town life are very sweet.

"Molly," her husband murmured, as they went on their journey, "I've been thinking it would be wise to stop in

Cape Town for a little while."

"The two of us?" she breathed, a mute fear on her face. He looked at her paled cheek, at the trouble in her eyes, and could not refuse.

"If you wish my dearest, the two of us."

And her spirits flew up, she was glad he was to be near her and glad to get to town, for the camp had not much to boast of in the way of accommodation, and her faith was small in the montebank who rode out every month with his medicines. The event approaching was one of much concern to her; she felt more secure and safe, knowing that capable doctors would be near, her case was not an ordinary one. Nothing daunted her, save the fear that the old trouble would return. Her earnest unceasing prayer was for death rather than that her mind would give way. Once she asked her husband would he be very sorry if she died.

He turned away his head to hide the tears that sprang to

his eyes.

"God forbid, Molly," he answered earnestly.

He did not let her suspect the trouble and anxiety that oppressed him on her account. He was frightened and nervous, the future loomed like a shadow before him.

## CHAPTER VI.

CRAWFORD left his work in charge of young Lamont, whom he had learned to trust and to esteem. He was his right hand man, and bore his full share of the anxiety, worry, and struggle. It was a struggle both of mind and body, severe, and intense—the hope, the disappointment, the waiting, the constant gnaw, the arduous work, constitute one of the fiercest turmoils a man ever endured. Yet what of it all if only the old close-fisted earth can be forced to slacken her hold on the precious dust. She had yielded to Crawford as she yields to the few fit men who strain mind and body, nerve, and blood, and life, for gold. He was rich beyond even his own wild dreams. He bought a handsome little villa for his wife out near by Simon's bay, about ten or twelve miles from Cape Town, then a favourite watering

place for the elite colonials.

The house was a wooden one with many apartments on the ground floor and a verandah running right round; before the house was a wide luxurious garden enclosed in a small furze hedge only a few feet high, that enclosed but did not seclude it from the rude public path, designated road. Rocks, great massive torn things, fringed with long satin seaweed, descended straight before the house into the vast and glorious sea. The entire route into Cape Town was then rocky, wild, rude, desolate, marked with that great savage magnificence of Africa, and skirting terrible cliffs that defied the gigantic billows of the Southern Ocean, while hanging above this path was the great brooding mountain. Little fishing villages lav along the sea-shore, much as they do along our own maritime roadways, but the wildness of the route, the bad road, kept these little villages beyond the crowd. Molly was in raptures with her house. Round the porch-pillars grew a vine plant green leafed and vivid; in the garden were scarlet convolvuli, layender salvias and the prune-toned ipomaeas spreading its tender blossoms everywhere; at the back of the house were beautiful blue gum trees and an orange orchard. When buying this house Molly had been under the delusion that she could live here with every convenience and luxury alone with her husband as she had done up-country. She was selfish and narrow that way, and wanted neither visitors nor society; but she soon found out this was impossible, everybody wanted to know them, everybody was asking who they were, and if the Belfast Boy were as rich as reported. With the little shanty at the Goldfields passed that sacred isolation, that narrow yet beloved existence that had been to her greedy heart half-heavenly, yet she kept apart as much as possible, and it soon became known that it was a favour indeed to receive a call or an invitation from the new millionaire's beautiful wife.

By and by two new children came into the world, a boy and girl. Molly seemed to collapse, but her mind held out nevertheless. She required skilled and careful nursing; the physician half-feared she would drop into a confirmed invalid.

Crawford was absent from the mines far longer than he intended, his work was calling him, and feeling relieved and thankful that the worst was over he had to go. It was their first separation, and their good-bye was tender as if it were The camp was a very lonely place without Molly, even the round of business could not quench the loneliness, the unrest, that came upon the miner. He hated to go into his shanty, its dreariness, the intense sensation of an absent presence struck at him every time he went forward to the door. There were no railways in those days to the Goldfields. and news, even from Cape Town was a tedious affair. the winter went in, Mrs. Crawford's health gradually came back, and the two pink faced little babes, whom the nurse scarcely permitted Crawford to see, throve joyfully. treated himself now and again to a holiday, spending a few days with Molly and then making back to the mines. His presence there became more necessary than ever, the dust was coming thicker and thicker; the richness of this block of quartz was the talk of the country. Crawford was the first who worked it, and its wealth was a surprise to the world. The engineers and surveyors had considered it poor, and thought the dust line would petre out; instead, it grew heavier, and as they blasted further and further into the bed rock the yield was tremendous. The Belfast Boy was more talked of and more envied than ever, his nickname began to be the synonym for Gold in South Africa. His claim was called the Belfast Block, and miners from every quarter of the globe stood looking with green eves at the unpretentious ugly looking strata whose richness deceived them all. Crawford continued to thrust further and further into the heart of the rock, the gold fever had him in her clutches. It takes a deal of dust to allay the disease. Large offers from the whole world were being made, but as yet he declined, but he knew he must soon sell for he could not live apart from his wife, who with the little children and her own delicacy could not bear life at the camp. That entire winter he went on appropriating the heavy crushings that lifted his fortune into the ranks of the fabulous.

When his claim was put upon the market, before two hours he could have sold it fifty times. He did not part with the property entire, but reserved a slice, partly because he loved it as most men love the business or calling that has brought success, and partly that young Lamont might be still in his employ. He loved his young manager, he had been a faithful, true man, and Crawford was determined to pay him well. But Louis was barely twenty; too young, in Crawford's idea, to have big money in his power. But Crawford had it in his heart to make him rich, to reward royally his constancy and faithfulness, and unremitting efforts. Lamont continued in his old position at the same wage, although his work was considerably lessened, and Crawford went to town to live with his wife.

Thev had a house now in Cape Town. The Belfast Bov was the most sought after man in the colony. Everybody knew him, everybody came from Belfast, or had uncles or grandmothers there, and called to make his acquaintance. The churches fell upon him for subscriptions, the hospitals, the bazaars, everything in the name of charity besought his aid. Truly every position of life has its price; to the Crawfords it seemed that to be rich meant to be polluted by a stream of strangers who insisted that they were bound to get all they asked.

Then the fashionable people wanted them, a social function seemed to gain an additional charm if the wife of the Belfast Boy were there. Truly her beauty created a sensation; dressed magnificently, her presence was a picture. Dazzling,

radiant, like some fresh brilliant bloom bringing delicious colour and sweetness, she came among the sunned women and swarthy Dutch descendants then numerous in good circles

of Cape Town.

Their dear old loneliness was impossible; Crawford teased his wife about this, and joked upon her fondness for reading as he tossed the shoals of begging letters, that came to him, over to her with a grin. At first she read these letters for fun, then the novelty wearing off they were looked on as a

nuisance and swept away unopened.

In the hot season they went to the pretty villa at Simon's Bay. Molly enjoyed this house, lived almost entirely outside, nursing her babies, enjoying the great magnificent ocean that rolled almost to her feet. The children grew great, fat, little beauties, both fair like mamma, but the little girl had eyes — "just papa's," Molly said. She called them William and Ruby, William for her husband, and Ruby because the little one was so precious, her darling "Ruby-Heart" now; a trophy of the deep devotion symbolized in her blazing gem ring.

Crawford let her have her way, although his own wish would have been for "Molly," that easy simple name that lay

in his bosom like love.

Molly fell a prey to the children; they seemed never out of her mind. Often when out driving or riding with her husband she worried him wondering "Were the dear children asleep? Were they crying? Was nurse thoroughly trustworthy in her absence?"

The children were her whole concern, seemed to absorb every thought. Ah! As she dandled her baby boy, or studied the finer features of the little girl, did no memory arise? Did "the skirts of some forgotten life trail noiselessly at her side?"

Too often, too often; but she turned from it, her troubled eyes sought forgetfulness on the tanned but noble features of her husband. She was safe, safe; all that was away in the wildness of the past. The dead past had buried its dead, and her spirits came back, and the deep tone of colour in her cheek flashed. Time seemed to leave no trace on her beauty; although her figure developed, it kept its charming grace, and never a line or wrinkle marred her beautiful countenance.

She was sitting out one evening with the children on the verandah, the vine at the porch was heavy with fruit, out

seaward it was glorious, the rocks brown and dark, the narrow strip of sand spread with orange seaweed, the sun was down and the water rippled scarlet with reflection. Above, in the deepest of blue skies, the silver Southern Cross shone pale. The day had been intensely hot, full of drooping flowers, motionless air, and a great silence, broken only by the ticks devouring the burnt grass, and the beat and break of a tired wave. To man and beast and nature, the suffering had been keen. Mrs. Crawford had been helpless, almost beaten down with the excessive heat. Now she was out in the cool, refreshed and well, sitting beside the children in their little cot-cradles fanning them gently with an ostrich fan, pausing now and again to gaze into their faces, to be quite sure the heat had not harmed them.

Presently the clatter of horse's hoofs rose and fell brokenly, the sounds were coming over the cliff road from Cape Town. She looked down the rude path, for the garden fence hid nothing, and saw Louis Lamont riding forward. Molly's eyes fell in displeasure, his exceeding likeness became more and more marked as he approached manhood. What was it made her see someone swinging off his charger one wintry day years ago, as the young man swung off at the gate? He came up to her, hat in hand, smiling pleasantly, although hot and flushed. Her rich, flashing beauty always delighted him to look upon, her face coloured with resentment as they

Klaas took his horse away and Louis threw himself beside her camp stool. In a moment she went indoors to order some refreshment, hoping that in her brief absence her husband would have joined Lamont, and that his business and his visit would be quickly over. The young man's presence irritated her, her feeling of uneasiness and disturbance in his company seemed to be increasing as the days went by. Her dearest wish, now that they were practically done with the

friendship.

shook hands.

Personally, she had nothing against the young man, but she could not like him; betimes it was actual pain to look at him, it was like jagging an old wound when he came into her presence.

mines, was to get rid of him-to be free for ever from his

Before returning to Lamont she despatched one of the servants in search of Crawford, he was only about the garden

or stables, but somehow his actual presence always gave her security and confidence, and she managed to enace herself and slip away as the gentlemen became engrossed. She rejoined Lamont reluctantly, the creole servant brought him some light refreshment—an iced drink, grapes, and biscuits. As he lay at her feet enjoying the cool, refreshing drink, to her unbounded joy he told her he was about to leave South Africa. It was but natural that she should ask if he went to France.

"Not directly," he replied, "I go first to Ireland, to your native city, I believe, Belrast," he added, smining, and looking

up into her face that coloured crimson.

"I have friends there, the Deloneys. You do not happen

to know them?"

She was bending over the children, fanning them carefully, first one then the other, he did not observe how the fingers round the ivory handle were trembling. She shrank away from him as from someone loathsome. Now she was certain, he was of them; they were kin. A fear shook her like a merciless giant, a horrible presentiment that he might bring her husband and that other into collision. Oh, God, the dead past might be unburied, and the living—what of the living?

Her heart quivered; the dark silence in that woman-heart who could paint. Presently, she felt the young man's eyes upon her—dark, rich, glossy, admiring eyes. She lifted herself up proudly, almost disdainfully, a burning spot on

either cheek, a light like anger in her flashing eyes.

"My father lived some miles from Belfast."
Something in her tone seemed to intimate that she did not wish to pursue the subject. Young Lamont lit a cigarette and lay silently watching her busying herself with the babies. Her actions recalled to him his own mother, of whom he had been thinking lately. So, had she devoted herself to him, so watched over his every breath; if she had only lived to see this day, he would have been proud and happy, but alas—alas. His earnings did not mean so much, when mother was not here to rejoice over them, but her voice, her dying voice, her latest breath called him far away from the glistering sands, the burning suns, the blue mountains, the rich gold-fields of Africa. He must go and fulfil her last bidding, he must go to Belfast; he was not penniless now, he could go without feelings of humiliation. He was looking neither for

patronage nor assistance from these friends of his mother. He was merely going out of reverence and obedience to her

dying behests.

Crawford came round the house-side; it was a pretty picture that met his eyes, his beautiful wife, fresh and cool, in her flimsy white dress, beside the white-cots, the handsome darkeyed young man at her feet, staring off into the burning,

limpid sea. He paused.

The young man's resemblance to Deloney was so startling, he could almost have believed he was the very man himself. As he stood looking at them the expression of his wife's face struck him as unfamiliar-strange, hard, almost cruel in its repressed emotions. He had half-forgotten by constant association that his young, capable manager was friend to the Belfast linen people and in a way had gone beyond that little affair of his wife's, but standing there in the cool evening looking at them, the whole scene of that Sunday evening with Deloney flashed back upon him with powerful intensity. He was not a man of imagination, but he was a true Ulster type, and although a thing might lie dormant in his mind yet he never forgot. The memory was distasteful, so keen was it upon him that the very same sensations strove to fire him again. With an inward laugh at his folly he went softly over the short burnt grass and joined them. Molly's hands went out to him impulsively; he was her safety, her salvation, her everything, that queer look upon her face vanished. The miner drew her hand through his arm, it was all the presence of the stranger permitted, but that little abrupt outbreak of joy at his coming pleased him. Every moment she grew dearer and entwined closer and closer round him.

They had tea on the verandah, a pleasant trio. Molly's spirits had risen at the idea of Louis' departure. Her quick imagination had shown her that no one would connect her, the millionaire's wife, with the Molly Bennett of Belfast, and for the rest she would try and take care that when Lamont left the country he would never meet them again. She laughed and spoke to him with a cordiality new to him, but her thoughts ran deeply, "I could not be mistaken, I always knew and felt it Perhaps they are cousins, but the resemblance is almost too vivid—too near for that."

After tea she went indoors but could not rest; a feeling

of uneasiness haunted her, a wish to hear every word that passed between her husband and this man possessed her.

She rejoined them again, Crawford went on with his conversation, he was in the habit of speaking openly before her. To him it was a surprise and regret that Lamont contemplated leaving; he considered this a convenient time to tell him he intended to reward him for his assistance and staunch faithfulness at the mines.

He very quietly offered him the remaining property at the Goldfields. Molly started violently, with a hasty movement she took her arm from Crawford's. "Their money, Crawford's money going to him, an offshoot of Deloney, a being of the same blood. It was abominable, it was galling, she would rather see it flung into the sea." But the millionaire talked on quietly in his even business-like way, and the quartz with its unknown wealth passed by word and honour to the young stranger.

Louis gathered Crawford's hand to his bosom; in the glamour and excitement of the moment he went back to his mother tongue and murmured some warm, deep words Crawford did not understand. But Molly did, and hated the young man afresh, hated his low, soft tone, and that familiar language that had borne many soft message into her bewitched ears. It was like something tantalizing, mocking, that laughed defiance in her face. Choking, wild, angry, scarcely able to keep from screaming out,

"You can't have it; you must not have it." She made her way indoors, bursting with rebellion, bitterness, and hate. She strode up and down the pretty room, then pausing over the cradle, fell upon her knees and wept hot, blinding, bitter

tears.

#### CHAPTER VII.

Two years passed away, the Crawfords are still living at Cape Town, wintering in their town house, summering at Simon's Bay. There had been no jar, nothing but harmony in their home-life, the tide of time had flowed pleasantly and sweetly for them. Suddenly, into this home serenity came eruption and separation, it came from without, within nothing had penetrated that sacred circle. Events had taken place in the country, the Boers and the British had had a brush. The affair had not died out of the public mind when the Zulu war broke out, British troops poured into South Africa, great and monstrous tales of war-horror thrilling the colony, many of the settlers enrolled themselves to fight under the home

flag, a battalion was soon formed.

The Belfast Boy entered the lists, the entreaties of his wife were of no avail, he was determined to fight for his country. But behind that loyal sentiment the satiety of having too much money and nothing to do had touched him, and he was glad of the real excitement and novelty of going to a war. Thus it was that the first real rupture in their home came. Molly was terribly cut up, when he came in to bid her good-bye dressed in the uniform of an officer—for being a rich man, a good rider, a good shot, and knowing something of the country and the language, the authorities had given him a Captaincy, her very heart turned sick. soldier! the very name, the very sight of one was repulsive. and the country was full of them. They were pouring into South Africa in legions. When she spoke of them she always called them with withering contempt, the names the natives gave them, "the Johnnies, the Red-men."

It annoyed her that her husband, so generous, so noblehearted should bear that hated name, or have common cause with them even for a time. As the days went by she saw a great many soldiers, for further along the Simon's Bay there was Anchorage, and the "China" and the "City of Paris" put in there for supplies, repairs, etc., on the way to Durban; thus letting loose in that quiet, unknown spot tribes of soldiers, officers more especially. Every day swarms dashed past on all kinds of nags, in all sorts of machines, glad of an

hour in Cape Town, while the ship was anchoring.

The very sight of the uniformed men going by her door aggravated Mrs. Crawford, but one balm she had in her disturbance the Belfast Brigade was in India. That knowledge gave her confidence and quieted somewhat the trembling alarm that awoke within her; if there had been another India on some further shore she would have been still more glad if the Brigade were there.

She suffered keenly. All the cheer that could be got out of her situation was from the children—the pretty little dimpled things with golden hair and rosy cheeks and pretty half-spoken words. She could not be miserable while she had them; nevertheless her passionate soul could never be happy without her husband, she revelled in him, without him life was tame, a bare colourless existence that she could

scarcely put in.

The war was going on up-country. Alarms and new alarms swept over the colony day by day, the soldiers at the seat of action were getting it hard, marching through tall grasses full of gorgeous flowers, through swamps heavy with tever, over sterile plains, up steep ridges and kopjes, roasted in daytime by the sun, frozen by night, and wet to the skin with the heavy dews. Many skirmishes had taken place,

bloody and deadly.

Soon after this, Cape Town went into a sort of hysteria to see the Prince Imperial, who was going to the war. It was fully expected that he would visit Cape Town, but the Prince modestly went on to the scene of action—alas, that he never returned, that the hand of a savage laid him low. A thrill ran through South Africa, through the ranks of the British troops, through the hearts, too, of the uncultivated warriors when they understood who was slain, the last of his race, far away from home where the tricolour never waved, where the voices round him were not the voices of his people. Cape Colony shuddered and became more and more unsettled. Newer, more diabolical tales of the horrors up-country convulsed Cape Town. In the height of this, further orders

went forth from the War Office; the Belfast Brigade, now

in India, were to embark for Zululand.

Crawford, before going up-country, had asked young Lamont to come as often as possible to cheer his wife, but Molly was colder and more impossible than ever. young man tried his best, but he was conscious of something in her not cordial, not that she was discourteous, policy forbade her to be that. When he knew she spoke his language he tried to get her to talk in French. repulsed him almost bluntly, then half-repenting at wounding him for no rational reason she sat down at the piano and sang the Marseillaise. As she turned to him and caught his eyes, his looks, a half-smothered ejaculation broke from her. She knew him; something in the look, something in the expression flashed his identity in upon her soul. She turned cold as death, death could never have the horrible sensation, the horrible recoil this discovery gave her. Those features, that expression were connected with the darkest hour woman ever lived through. The young man in his native gallantry took up her hand and kissed it.

"Thank you, dear Mrs. Crawford, that is like a breath from France, like a wave of the flag I love. She turned away coldly, a smile like derision on her lips, but the gentleman did not notice. He was throbbing, touched very much in that far country with his nation's hymn. He would be glad of the day that saw him back again in sunny France.

Mrs. Crawford left him. She could not bear the strain of his company. When she reached her private room she

flung up her arms wildly.

"Oh, my God, am I never to get away from this? Is it to pursue me for ever? What curse has brought this boy into my house?

#### CHAPTER VIII.

MEANWHILE the Belfast Brigade reached Zululand—fine strapping fellows, wild for a skirmish with any foe, and glad to escape the monotony of India. It is no purpose of ours to follow the war; but in the very first engagement Lieutenant Deloney was disabled—shot in the right arm. It was a nasty wound, and the surgeons were rather afraid amputation would be necessary. But the young officer refused, and the surgeons did their best for him. He came round slowly, and as soon as he was able was removed to the convalescent home in Durban. Meanwhile the fighting went on up country great fierce engagements were taking place. The "Red soldiers" had scattered and broken and shattered the fearsome serried black warriors that swept down and round on every side in their famous horse-shoe or hollow square manœuvres. Never, perhaps, in all history, did the English Legion face a fiercer foe, magnificent in physique, perfect in discipline, and in military tactics of their own kind matchless, able to put into a single skirmish 10,000 men to-day; into another, on the morrow, 25,000. For fully four generations trained to play the soldier, or die as a coward at The Tree by their own chief's order. After some time Cetewayo was taken, forbidding, with rugged royalty, the dragoon who was about to seize him.

"White soldier, touch me not. I surrender."

From this time interest in the war rapidly fell; in fact, it was considered over. Volunteers were disbanded, settlers returned to their homes proud of their experience, proud that they had stood up for the old country. Crawford returned to his distracted wife hale and hearty. Her troubled heart found calm once more, but she was far from peace, far from feeling safe while Africa held the dreaded Belfast Brigade.

When Lieutenant Deloney grew a trifle stronger he came across country searching for adventure, sight-seeing and health. It had been confoundedly dull in Durban, and it was

a relief to get away. He was still practically an invalid, and had his arm in bandage as he travelled to the capital of the

Colony.

It was the autumn of the year, patches of mealies were yellowing over the country, the grass was burnt and seared, the flowers had a withered look, but the fruits were ripe and delicious. Those who have experienced a hot climate can understand the delicious picture a heavy vine makes in a withered landscape, and Deloney as he crossed the country

enjoyed the strange wilted yet luscious scene.

Usually Molly went with the children unto the verandah, just as the sun was flying, a little airing for the children before retiring. The air was beautiful, cool, clear, refreshing, with neither the frost nor the heat of the extreme parts of the day or night. The sea was a mass of blue shimmering in the soft air. She wore a white muslin dress with a touch of real flowers in her uncovered hair. Little William was studying a box of toy soldiers and keeping very still; Ruby was calling for papa, and slapping her mamma's cheek.

"Whose darling are you?" asked the fond mother, putting

her arms round the little girl.

"Pa-paa's."

"And whose love?"

" Maa-ma-as."

"Ma-ma," cried little William, looking up, "I's a sool-dor."
"No, my child, you are a gentleman," was her reply.

"Is pa-pa not a sool-dor?"

"Papa is a gentleman. Repeat it, 'gentleman.'

"Geentlemaan," said the child stoutly, revealing the slight Dutch accent so prevalent then in the Colony.

"Now, William Crawford is a gentleman."
"William Crawfoord is a geentlemaan."

She drew the little lad to her and kissed his brow.

"Never say 'soldier,' mamma does not allow it." Little Ruby pulled some of the jasmine out of her mother's hair and scattered it over her, crowing with joy as the white blossoms

like pickles of snow fell about.

Presently Molly lifted the children one on either knee and began to croon to them an old home lilt. Their eyelids began to droop, and they were soon asleep. She sat on, lost in thought; lately she had begun to weary of South Africa, she would like to go home. Oh! if she only dare go back to

Ireland, back to her own native city. But her heart failed her. Someone was there, a little one. She shrank at the mere idea, and rousing herself, glanced about at the swift oncoming night. The stars were showing, the sea quivered with stronger lustre, yet so clear that it revealed the various tinted undergrowths. As she sat there so, with her little sleeping ones, a sense of peace and security came over her that she had not known for many a day. Her husband was home, safe to her, safe to the children. Life was good and beautiful; she looked down the cliff path for Crawford. He was in Cape Town, had been the whole day attending a meeting of the Volunteers. She was expecting him back any minute. She said to herself, "I will go and meet him; I must take the children indoors."

But yet she sat on, strangely serene, strangely at peace. Presently the fumes of a cigar were wafted up the cool light breeze, then a moment later a voice caught her ear singing carelessly. She heard not the words, but she knew the voice. Her eyes started in her head, her heart galloped, then seemed to stop. She strove to rise, but a feebleness, an oppression like nightmare, glued her to the seat. A choking rose in her throat, her dry lips panted as the voice grew more

distinct, and fell as it were about her.

"Oh, my God! what is this? Was she mad, was she dreaming? No, no, no no! There was no mistake—none—none—none. He was out there upon the roadway. Great Heaven! He was coming up the path with his easy gallant swinging step.

Darkness seemed to surround her, dense, thick, choking, but in its centre, clear, unmistakable, terrible, stood Denny

Deloney.

## CHAPTER IX.

HE came upon her accidentally; strolling out in the afternoon he had chanced on the cliff-road, so wild, so gorgeous and romantic with its magnificent sea-stretch on one hand and its looming mountain on the other. It reminded him in some ways of the cliff paths on the Donegal sea-board. As he roamed idly along, it occurred to him it would be pleasant to stop out here; with the idea of hunting out an inn—hotel was not to be expected—he held on his way, determined to inquire at the first

house he came to.

As he turned in at the gate in the drooping evening he merely noticed a lady and children on the verandah; as he neared he noticed the lady's shining hair, it recalled to his mind that hair that had dazzled his very eyes, that woman who had dazzled the heart and soul of him, who had made the man in him lick the very dust. The years had swallowed her in silence, deep, unbroken, fearful. Mab had written him every particular she had been able to obtain, and she had traced her step by step every inch of the way right on to Liverpool. There the clue had broken, the keenest detectives from Scotland Yard had failed to glean one certainty beyond that. Later on an advice came to hand that a young woman answering the given description had embarked on one of the big ocean liners bound either for Australia or South Africa; but the passenger lists, copies of which were forwarded, contained neither Bennett nor any name whereby she could be traced. Molly had taken her berth in the arab's name, Edwards, losing, or hoping to lose, all connection with her Belfast name. It had been her fixed intention to tell Crawford the ordeal through which she had passed, and to ask him to acknowledge and use this name by which she meant to start life afresh; but woman, woman, Eve to the last, had allowed herself to be as one of the gods again.

Lieutenant Deloney came up into her presence; involuntarily he uncovered, then stood as it transfixed. The weary years,

that he had passed without her, rolled from him, the deep warm throbbing of early manhood gushed full in his bosom; a sense of joy that is indescribable came over him, he had experienced what it is to exist with the fine delicious edges of desire blunted in his being, with the one woman, the only one who could charm with her beauty, with her personality, with her glorious intense, keen passions passed out of touch, yet never out of his memory, never out of his longing yearning heart.

Here she was, more dazzling, more a woman than ever, glorious in her fuller richer charm, perhaps more glorious than

in her first fresh early bloom.

The perspiration of intense excitement began to hail off him. He strove to keep a hold on himself. As his eyes feasted much in the old way over her entire person they rested on the old familiar flaming ring. It was upon her finger in its old place, only now beside it gleamed a heavy wedding ring of pure golddust, which her husband had crushed out of the solid rock

She is married, he concluded; she has married the ruby heart man. Then his eyes noticed the children nestling in against her breast, and to his mind flashed up the image of another child, her elder, his only one, at home in his father's house.

What made his tanned skin flush deeply, resentfully?

"We have met again, Madalina; I never expected it to be thus." and he glanced from one child to another. She sat as if turned to stone, conscious only of the terrible truth that he stood there, the same refined, well-bred, handsome Irish brave as of vore, only tanned and burned with the suns of India and the South African summer; but his large, beautiful, powerful black eves had still their lustre and their hidden depths, his entire bearing and general aspect were unaltered.

"Speak to me, Madalina," he said, "speak to me; surely

vou have a greeting."

His voice half awoke the little boy, he stirred slightly and murmured through his sleep.

"I's no sool-door, mam-ma don't allow sool-door. I's a

geentlemaan."

"Little boy," said Deloney, strangely nettled, "once she loved a soldier."

The child now opened his eyes full upon the stranger, then hid his face in mamma's bosom. The lad's movement startled Molly, drove the utter helplessness from her. She rose, staggering slightly under the weight of the two children, and turned into the open French window. Deloney followed, laid his hand upon her shoulder; it stopped her, that light potent touch.

"Madalina, have you married? Have you dared to marry knowing the bonds between us? Nothing can sever them, either Here or Hereafter, there exists between us the spirit-tie that defies Time or Eternity. The bond upon me can never break, I will assert it; you were mine first, you are mine still."

So quietly, so gently he spoke, but it was as the swift silent destruction of ink flowing over pure white paper. She lifted her head scornfully, furious defiance shooting out of her flashing eyes. He stood bowing politely as she passed into the room; then he turned down the little gate-path slowly.

A few perches from the gate he met one of the creole servants who had been having her evening out, and was returning. She had witnessed the little scene upon the verandah, for the low garden hedge was no obstacle. She looked daggers at him as he passed. She hurried indoors, and communicated the whole affair to the other servants. Klass, disgusted at himself for being so long in the back parts of the house, rushed out into the road. He had a wholesome dread of the red men, yet he was a match for one, no person was to be seen. Deloney had merely gone down the rocks to the water edge to think over this unlooked-for meeting with Madalina. The high cliffs completely screened him, and the negro returned highly indignant at the creole making game of him. But the woman stoutly maintained her assertion, and so loud did the clamour become that it penetrated to the mistress.

Molly sent for the creole, heard her story, and without one word dismissed her on the spot, paying her handsomely in lieu of notice. The servants wondered and whispered, but there was little fear of their discussions getting outside their own domain in future. Molly felt bound to rid the house of such a witness; every nerve in her was shaking, every sense how to act half-bewildered. The enemy was upon her, at her very door-cheek. One definite idea rose above the chaos and confusion of her mind—the sooner they quitted Cape Town the

better; out of it they must immediately go.

She rushed up and down the room panting and excited. The terrible, the fearful thing that she had always dreaded seemed about to break over her. Her lips were twitching, her hands, her knees, her whole being in a tremble. Going to her bedroom

she plunged her face and hands into the wash-basin. Her heart was gasping:

"Thank God Crawford did not come up; thank God he was

detained."

She sat beside her sleeping children, she looked into their beautiful faces in deepest inexpressible love; the terrible thought that she might be torn from them wrung her. "I could not bear it," she cried, "I could not part with my children."

The idea seemed to overcome, to suffocate her. She caught up a light silk scarf, threw it over her head, and went down the garden, through the spotless scentless jasmine and vivid convolvulus across the rugged pathway, and over to the cliffs.

The carmine of the sunken sun was flush across the sky, losing itself in the darkening sea-line; the rush of the waves was music, full of soft minor cadences that whispered mayhap the songs of the sea flowers, those fragile beautiful blossoms that the fingers of men or maidens have never plucked. Molly stood at the water edge, dangerously close, and gazed down. The soft cool air fanned her burning brow, her burning tearless eyes; she drank the ozone in greedily, yet as she gazed her face contracted with emotion, the veins stood out upon her temples, her hot eyes flashed like lightning. A terrible ordeal went on within her, the temptation of the water, the temptation of it; who may describe? A few minutes there would end all—all—the terror of her husband, the terrible humiliation of exposure, all would be swallowed up in the glittering singing water.

Her children would reverence her memory with that sacred excessiveness children have for parents passed away in their early years; her husband would weep, and Cape Town would mourn over the beautiful young wife of the millionaire. It would be an accident walking on the cliffs in the evening, overbalanced, and ——

Deloney was lying some distance off trying to realise what had occurred, trying to realise the changed position his love occupied. "Married! Married!" kept beating in his ears like the knell of doom, "Married! His Madalina married!"

As he lay throbbing, excited, glad at having discovered, wild at the fact that he found her another man's, he saw her swift white figure rush down to the water; as she gesticulated, suffered and fought her battle, he longed to go to her; to take

her in his arms, to soothe her, to speak words that had lain in his heart these many years for her ears alone. But with a master effort he held back, and kept himself ready to spring in and rescue her if she dared the water. As he watched, he half-wished she would, for then his arms would be about her once more; then perhaps he would bear her away with him up to the desert of the country, anywhere, only never, never, from him in this life again. Or, mayhap, they could go together, his lips on hers, his arms around her, on to that other World where kindred souls can never part.

She fought hard, longing to plunge forward, but drawn by fine unbreakable fibres back toward her little children, her home, her husband, her love, her life. Her excitement

lessened, her waving arms fell.

"I'll brave it to the very last," she muttered, "I am not now helpless, my humblest negro would assegai him at the

lifting of my little finger."

The fire died out of her eyes leaving them sober with determination as fierce, as deep as a man's. Gathering the shawl round her she sprang up the cliff-path and home.

## CHAPTER X.

SHE hurried indoors, the supper table was laid, but still her husband had not returned. She sat her down by the low log fire to await him planning the future Presently Crawford rode up, he was flushed slightly, evidently the last meeting of the Volunteers had not come off without a few toasts to Old England, the Volunteers, etc. He was in a jovial mood, and not much inclined to supper. However he sat down, and as they lingered at the table she broached the matter of leaving the Colony.

"I would like to see a bit of Italy," she said, gazing into

his merry eyes.

"So you're tired at last of South Africa; of course, whenever you can be ready I'm ready, but as to Italy do you know I'd rather look at the sky through the big bushes up Glencairn, you remember the silver and blue of that sky in the spring sunlight away up by Cunningham's Place; Molly, I'd rather see that sky as anywhere on God's earth."

"Yes," she murmured; "Yes, there's no place like home."

Then she went on gently to point out that it might not be expedient for him to return. He was innocent in his own eyes, but his innocence had never been established in the eyes of the law. The old charge still hung over him, still he suggested that they go to Belfast, and have the thing over. "Let the law take its course, and whatever the finding to bear it, and

be done with the affair openly and honourably."

But her woman heart would not hear of it, and ere they stopped speaking it was decided they would leave Cape Colony by the next steamer for Europe. She meant to have her point and get Italy. There she knew there were many interesting and delightful places where they could linger and linger, perhaps finally settle. They must never touch Ireland, never, never. As they lingered discussing the matter Crawford ever went back to the scenes of his early life, he could not keep from talking of the old Shankhill Road, the little Springfield

village, built of solid stone, and lying between the top of the city and the hill foot, and the glen of the Forth River, and the old school-house, and Agnes Street corner, and the flelds off it where the boys fought their little quarrels, played football, and on Sunday evenings took their girls awalking. He seemed to see the old life of the locality, away far away at Simon's Bay.

Molly went over to the piano, her heart was throbbing wildly, and she dare not speak lest the burning tears within

her eyes would gush out.

"Molly," he called across the room, "sing me 'Molly Darling.' How I loved that song years ago, I think I hear you singing it up the old Glencairn Road, with Johnnie Gray playing the concertina, and the boys and girls round us in a circle."

So she sang:

"By the stars that shine above me, By their glorious majesty. By this heart that beats within me, Still I love, I love but thee."

As she finished she turned round passionately.

"Willie, is it true, that old song, true as in those old days when we were boy and girl?"

He put his arm round her shoulder, and looked into her

eyes.

"Why ask that? Why, it is truer now than ever, my beautiful wife," he said softly, his eyes awakening as it were to the beauty that was hers in such abundance, the beauty that Time

had only made more beautiful than in early girlhood.

She was trembling, her intensity pained herself, her hungering soul wanted his assurances of love and trust. She dreaded the future, dreaded it in a way no language can express, and wondered in her deepest soul would Crawford stand the test the future might bring. Would his love bear the disclosures that might lie ahead? It was courage, it was life to have him assure her, to have him look those deep unutterable words into her eyes. Truly husband never loved wife more; and no woman ever took more strength from a man's love than the beautiful wife of the millionaire took that night as she sang to him that old song of their youth, with the soul within her trembling with the terrible fear that he might put her away.

Next day they made known their resolve to leave Cape

Colony. Molly had many things to see about, and as Crawford was riding into Cape Town to make some arrangements, she decided to go with him. There were several little things she wished to purchase for the children and herself necessary

to their journey.

They went on horseback, it was then quite usual for ladies to do their shopping on horseback. Mrs. Crawford was radiant, her spirits were up, the prospect of getting away so soon had given her new hope and courage. As they rode into town she talked to Crawford of the splendid sights they would see, and the splendid time they would have, and she ran over the names of the show places that she was familiar with by reading. The big Belfast Boy riding beside her so proudly glanced at her now and again with a sense of reverence. She knew everything, every place. Where was there such another worman?

They separated in Cape Town, she to do her purchasing, he going to his club arranging that she should call for him there. Some men might not have cared for this, but Crawford was rather proud of it, but it was an open secret how fond he was of his wife, and took her with him everywhere. As Molly turned her horse's head to rejoin her husband she spied Louis Lamont sauntering along the footpath. It was in vain to pretend not to observe him, there was nothing for it but rein in. She held out her hand frankly, and being in better spirits at her near escape she addressed him in French telling him in almost saucy tones they were going away.

"Oh," he exclaimed, "that I might go with you."

She laughed triumphantly, and cracked her whip, glad for the first time that their property at the Goldfields was his. It would tie him, it would chain him in South Africa. She would give as much any day to be quit of him.

"You must not forget those you leave at the Colony."

"I shall never forget you, Louis."

The young gentleman looked into her eyes, he could not understand their blazing depths, he only saw they were rich, beautiful eyes that could bewitch.

"Thank you," he said in a low tone.

Molly smiled satirically at his earnestness. Had he only known her thoughts, only known the dark irretrievable scene that rose up like a ghastly picture to her mind, perhaps he might have understood how truly she had spoken.

While they were chatting momentarily a lady passing on the foopath stopped suddenly, and gazed in a kind of blank surprised horror into Molly's face. Molly noticed the lady on the street, but she did not flinch, her hand upon the ribbons did not falter, she had nerved herself to keep cool no matter what happened. She bade Louis good-bye and galloped off to her husband.

This lady walking down the street-way was the Lady Winnie. "Love is strong as death," says the Great Authority, Love to this woman was stronger than distance or poverty or

refusal.

It carried her to India, it bore her up-country to her beloved one's station in dark Hindustan. Now again she had crossed the ocean to South Africa. Where he was she must be.

Lieutenant Deloney had been both pained and surprised when she came to him in India. The faithfulness of the little soul touched him. He was experiencing himself how bitter it is to love, to lose; it made him more gentle, more considerate than he would otherwise have been. But yet, what Lady Winnie craved could never be, their old relations could never be renewed. He gave her money, for he could not see her starve, and as the weary empty burning days of India suffused him he was glad betimes to spend an hour with her. But there was nothing beyond the barest formality. He never even kissed her finger. He could not now bear the thought of touching a woman, something deep in the soul of him revolted, something harked back to Her, the mother of his child. Lady Winnie bore with him, loved him, hoped in him, believed her day would come. Her faith strengthened as she realised she had him without a rival, that the woman he had loved so passionately was not here. So, in spite of everything she followed wherever he went. He did not want to be harsh, yet it disturbed him a great deal when she turned up in Cape Town. He had given her money to go home; instead, when the regiment was gone, she came to South Africa.

She had traced, and tracked, and followed till she found him in Cape Town. She went back to her lodgings hot, flushed, excited. This unexpected rencontre had stirred her to the depths. The idea came into her mind that Lieutenant Deloney had resumed relations with her old rival, that now the expectations of years, the waiting, the prolonged hope

would melt away. She lay down on the couch overcome, her

eyes hot, dry, bursting with pain.

Lieutenant Deloney was waiting for her; he intended to have a very straight talk with her, this coming after him from place to place must stop, he would pay her passage to London, and their acquaintance must drop.

He saw something had upset her, and an unpleasant notion that she might have chanced upon Madalina crossed his mind.

He waited for her to speak. "Well, I never," she gasped.

"What?"

"You could have knocked me down with a feather."

"What happened, Winnie?"

She glared at him, but without speaking rose and filled a glass of wine from the decanter on the sideboard, and drank

it greedily.

The years of anxiety, of faithfulness, of patience, of looking forward to happiness somehow seemed blasted; the knowledge grim and keen that her first fausse pas in life meant a tinge all along the line had come—that the man who sat there before her would not respond, would not unbend, would not have her, yet he had caused everything, and every throb of her life was to him.

Yet all would have been different, so different but for that one, that woman with the yellow hair. She had divided them at the first, now she was here, riding about on her horse, and showing off, and coming between them again. Lady Winnie

became furious, lashing in very rage.

Lieutenant Deloney still waited, he had learned it was the wisest way to let her discharge herself. She eyed him up and down, her cheeks a degree redder, her eyes burning more hotly after the wine. Her hands shut and opened as they pushed back the heavy curls upon her brow.

"I cannot have this, I will not have it; surely after this

weary waiting you would not be so heartless."

"What is it you will not have?"
"You are on with Lyle again."

He flushed deeply, the worst had happened.

"That name," he said calmly, "I thought was banned

between you and I."

"Aha," she said cruelly, "it's not dead in you yet. But she hates you, she put that scar upon your brow, she would

not marry you, all because you played her false; but you

played me false too, and I, God help me, love you still."
"Lady Winnie," he said gently. "I have often told you you must not love me; there can be no question of that kind between us. I have come to see you to-day specially to ask you to go home. I will pay your passage, and give you something, but this-this-friendship must drop."

"Of course," she retorted, "of course, when she is here I'm

in the road."

The tears were gathering in her eyes, but she held them back bravely. She was struck at the core, wounded deeper than expression, and somehow she connected it with the woman of the yellow hair. Her poor heart had deluded itself, that if she could only have him, only get him to herself without Lyle to distract him she would win him again. She had had him to herself without winning him; but yet, when this woman turned up, he wanted to cut her, to pass by her love and her hope, to drive her from him.

"Do you want rid of me?" she asked. "Answer me now, .

like a man."

"Yes," he returned, slowly, his eyes on the floor. "Lady Winnie, you must understand, you cannot surely be so silly as to think I can stand this any longer?"

"I understand you fully, but rid of me you'll never get-not if the whole British Army were drawn up to stop me.

might shoot me, but I'd die rushing through."

"Denny," she resumed again, her tone softening and melting, "there's never been anybody but you, I've been true always in word, and deed, and thought. Why need you waste your love on that woman? Why not give it to me? I'm hungry for it, I'm waiting for it. Marry me, Denny, I'll be good, I'll be different. Denny-oh Denny."

She buried her face in her hands overcome and broken down. "Don't you know," she said, amid her emotion, "that whether we're educated or not, or high-born or low-born, we're only men and women; that the little red-house in the churchyard takes us without any distinction? Denny, it's passing from us, this life, this feeling of existence, and I'd rather be dead as live as I've had to do. You think I'm playing the game too high asking marriage, but why should I not? I'm a woman, you're a man; I've given you all I had to give, I want you and I cannot leave you.

"Lady Winnie," he said softly, "if I did marry you I could never give you what you want, what you are asking; you would suffer even more keenly than at present. I was a brute to you, but I've tried to-to do a little to you in atonement, as an honest man I cannot go further, what you ask is impossible."

She was silent, her whole body quivering and stung, her face wet with tears, her dark eyes full of the terrible sensation. the truth of his tone awoke. She was cowed and helpless. "You would not banish me if she were not here."

"Lady Winnie, I have long wished to speak to you, but allowed things to drift. I acknowledge you have suffered; if you go away to America or Australia, or wherever you like, I will settle an annuity on you so that you many never want; but it is impossible that this semblance of a relationship between us should continue."

She did not speak. As for the money, she dare not now refuse it. She had nothing only whatever he might care to give. The iron had entered her soul, the bitterness of defeat was upon

her, and she wept bitterly.

# CHAPTER XI.

LIEUTENANT DELONEY left Lady Winnie and went quickly into the principal thoroughfare, his eyes about for Madalina. He deemed she was in town. As he sauntered about he chanced on a wealthy settler whom he had met at a card party in a friend's house. They went on together, the stranger asking him to ——— Club. As they approached they observed two horses pawing the ground restlessly, in charge of a big Kaffir. They were splendid brutes with proud shapely heads, one white as milk shining like satin in the sunshine, the other a dark, powerful bay, whose eyes flamed with high mettle.

"Oh, the Belfast Boy's," explained the settler to his com-

panion's inquiry.

"Who is *The* Belfast Boy?" asked Deloney, "everything is the Belfast Boy's, perhaps they mean myself; I, too, am a Belfast boy," and something of his old smile beamed on his countenance for a moment.

"Look," returned the first speaker, "there he is and his

wife."

Deloney looked. A big broad-shouldered gentleman in a fawn riding coat and a large wide-awake hat was assisting a lady down the front steps of the club-house. There was that something in his air that gave a stranger the impression of a monied man. As Molly got into the saddle she smiled and bowed to a crowd of gentlemen who were lounging round the porch and watching them off.

Crawford leapt into the saddle, and they galloped off.

Deloney saw them. A fit of jealousy, new and sickening passed over him.

"So that is the Belfast Boy," he said at last.

"Yes, the richest man in the Colony."

"What is his name?" he asked in a low voice.

"His name is Crawford. His wife is the beauty of Cape Town. He idolizes her; in fact, he hangs about her like a lover."

"And she?" asked the soldier without looking up.
"Oh, ditto. I remember the first time I saw them it was at the Governor's ball a year or two back. They were dancing together, everyone was noticing them; when he spoke her face lit and seemed to flash up to him. I thought they were lovers until I was introduced."

"Are they long married?"

"Well, I really can't say; I have known them between two and three years."

"I wish I knew them," said Deloney, regretfully.

"They are sure to be at the Governor's dinner to-morrow night, you can easily be introduced."

How did he make his money?"

"The Goldfields. He is the queerest piece going, his quartz was only half worked when he made it over to a French youth

who doesn't know the value of it."

"He'll come to," returned Deloney, as they entered the - Club. In the buffet, several gentlemen were talking of the millionaire and his wife. Deloney was compelled to listen. He heard of their princely liberality, of the table they kept, of choice little suppers at Simon's Bay, of the good fellowship of the millionaire, of the charm of his wife, her wonderful touch on the piano, their adulation for each other, how very lucky were the few who were honoured with invitations to their house.

"A millionaire," thought Deloney; "a millionaire, it licks a Deloney fair and square; but there shall be another Belfast Boy at the dinner to-morrow night. Here's to our merry

meeting."

And he let himself go more than he had done for years. He arranged everything to his own taste; they would be introduced in the ordinary way, he would cultivate the millionaire's friendship, worm an entrance into the house, and then —.

He did not shape it further, but revelled in the delicious, vague triumphant future. He would triumph in spite of

everything.

#### CHAPTER XII.

THE Crawfords were expected at the Governor's dinner party, but Molly was ill and unstrung. The vision of Lady Winnie on the street-way glowering up at her had not been without its effect, although she had kept up outwardly until safe at home. She connected Lady Winnie's presence of course with him; a thrill of horror chilled her to the bone. His threats at her own door-cheek were fresh in her ears. When she saw Lady Winnie those threats appeared worse than shameless.

She dare not face this public dinner, so Crawford, who cared very little for these great social affairs, wrote their apologies,

and despatched his negro with them.

Deloney wandered through the company searching for the tall, broad-shouldered bronze man, watching the entrance door for her. Both were absent, many were the regrets on all sides; it made Deloney savage to hear the company expiating on her beauty and his wealth. He left early, angry and disappointed. He divined that she was at the bottom of it, and determined to mete it out to her by and by.
"Fate is with me," he soliloquised; "yes, surely, or I never

would have chanced on her out here; it's for good, it's for

And he slept upon the thought as a child might, sanguine and sure. In the morning his servant brought him a letter; it was addressed and re-addressed, had been in Zululand, and had followed him across country to Cape Town. written in his father's thin quavering handwriting. He tore the envelope open quickly, there was only a line that flashed before his eyes. He flushed deeply, then went pale to the lips. his whole body trembled as with an ague. His brother Victor was dead. There were no particulars, just the simple fact, and it hurt Denny more than he believed it could.

He could not breakfast, and going out sauntered on up the

cliff road, buried in reflections.

Now Louis Lamont, having his business in town finished.

determined to pay a parting visit to the Crawfords. He was chiding at not being able to go to Europe with them, but the quartz was full of dust, and he knew it was to his own benefit to work it out, yet he wanted away. Only his fear that Crawford might fancy he did not prize his princely gift kept him from selling. He was rich enough, and would have liked to join them. That home fever was getting into his veins, that old desire to see Belfast, and fulfil his mother's last demands was keen in him.

He rode off in the first cool towards the Crawfords' house, charging away at full speed, and rounding a band at the outskirts of the town where the road was only a foot-track, he came upon a soldier creeping along with head bent. There was almost a collision; it was the very best horsemanship that held the brute's haunches up to give the pedestrian a chance to clear away. The brief excitement was fie ce to both men, Louis almost certain the man would be mangled under him; the officer startled at the nearness of accident. But it was averted, and the two shook hands in relief. A they gazed at each other a sort of curious, indescribable recognition touched the minds of both. Each saw in the features of the other a picture of his own, but they simply shook hands and went their ways with that unspoken notion of resemblance in their minds.

At another time Deloney might have cultivated the chance acquaintance, exchanged cards, and asked him to his hotel, but

this morning he could not do it.

That letter from home had filled his mind. It recalled many things gone by, their childhood, their last words, that strange interference at St. Anne's Church door. He had never been his own man since that day. True he had been the coward, the coward to the core; he should have gone on in spite of Victor. Oh, God, that he had. Now Victor was gone, into the little red house of which Lady Winnie had spoken. He thought of the family grave, so old, so green, so silent in Friar's Bush—it had never been opened during his life-time until now it had opened and closed over his only brother.

His mind wandered on, the sad event would change his prospects. He was now the only son of his father, the Linen Prince of Ulster, the wealth of the house would be his, the

name of his ancestors, the big business, everything his.

The day was when it would have made him tingle; somehow he did not seem to care now. Poor old Vic, and his mind

went back to their parting, to his request anent the child. How would it be with the little one now, what would his father do, how would he reply to this letter of his? How write to his poor mother? This blow would fall on her very heavily and severely, and in every thought of his mother and father mingled the presence of the little child—the little child whose name was never mentioned yet, whose personality filled his

He dandered on thinking deeply, he neared the little fishing hamlet, he was hoping to secure a room in the wayside inn, and have an excuse for haunting the cliff road to Simon's Bay,

but really that he might be in her vicinity.

Meanwhile Lamont went on to Crawford's house. A certain delicious fuss was going on, the millionaire himself following his wife about, doing this, undoing that, running up, running down, listening to her plans, enjoying everything and feeling very busy and indispensable. Presently the children break away from the nursery and burst into the room, Crawford's arms open to them, and they both dash in charging over chairs and stools and anything that stood in the way. There are cries for "tosses" in his arms, "rides on his foot," rides on his shoulder, "swings" and a general hubbub. Molly went to another room where something else had to be done, because it was no use trying to do anything when Willie began to play with the children. Sometimes she said he was as much a child as either of them. The Kaffir servant also retired "clicking" angrily, thinking of the room she would have to put to rights when the play was over. In the middle of this Lamont came in. The children gathered round him, took him as it were into their game. During a cessation the young man began to recount his recent adventure, he chanced to say the officer had his arm in a sling.

Little William was on his father's knee. As he listened he strove hard to recall something, sleeping or waking the retention of children is remarkable. Somehow the child had been impressed even amid his drowsiness by the soldier with his arm in the sling. He had felt that his mother resented that visitor, and his little child heart had risen up in its helpless rebellion. He had forgotten the incident until Lamont mentioned the sling. As the gentlemen talked he suddenly spoke out:

"Pa-pa, that sool-door touch my ma-a-ma, my ma-a-maa on the veerandaah."

Crawford heard the child like someone in a dream, he asked him of what he was talking; the little one in his own words and in his own way repeated the whole affair.

Crawford put the boy down from his knees after a little

time, and quietly and very slowly sought his wife.

The idea of going to Molly about this was distasteful. But he could not let it pass. She was in her dressing room looking over some dresses, and putting into a big trunk with her own hands some of her most valued things. When he opened the door she looked up.

She saw his face, her blood chilled; once, only once, had she seen his face like that. She had not forgotten the terrible expression, the awful calmness of that face long ago in the prison cell in Belfast, its expression now and then were much

the same.

She tried to speak, but somehow the words died in her throat. What had happened? Had the very worst happened? Had Deloney himself called and told her husband everything; she felt that he was capable of conduct like that. She compelled herself to go over to the window. Ah! there was Lamont's horse outside with the groom, for he was going off immediately. Wonderful how peace seemed to leave the house when he entered. What curse did he bring? What terrible curse to her and hers?

"Molly," said Crawford, slowly, "you did not tell me that

a soldier insulted you upon the verandah."

His voice, his manner, his entire bearing were terrible, yet so calm, so deadly calm that the very power to breathe seemed to forsake her.

"What do you mean?" she gasped.
"I have already told you."

"You must be dreaming," she returned, trying to speak fightly.

"Molly, little William has told me; I must know when this

occurred, and who the soldier was?"

By one of those strange flashes of telepathy the minds of each became charged with Deloney. Crawford knew not why he thought of him, but he did. Molly turned scarlet, she bounced out of the room, caught up the little lad, and rushed him into his father's presence.

"What falsehoods have you been uttering?" she cried, passionately; "what put such things into your head. Speak, or I'll shake you asunder. Were you thinking of the night I

taught you to say not a soldier but a gentleman?"

The child cowered back, trembling and frightened. He did not grip much of what was said, only that mamma was angry with him, and he looked beseechingly at papa.

"Speak," cried Molly again; "speak."
"That will do Molly," said Crawford, putting the child out

"Children and fools tell the truth. Who I say was this

"There was no man, nothing of the kind; the child is confusing a conversation I had with Ruby and himself one evening on the verandah. Surely you know me better than that I would suffer anyone to insult me at my own door."

He paced up and down the room.

"I could stand anything except that kind of thing."

She was quivering, striving to be calm, striving to be easy

before him, but the heart of her was weak as water.

"It is your word or the child's?" he went on. "Lamont was telling me of almost riding down an officer with his arm in a sling, and the child then spoke out saying that was the soldier who touched you on the verandah."

"Willie, believe me, the child is mixed up. He fell asleep on my lap; previously I had been teaching him to say he was

a gentleman, not a soldier." "Why not a soldier?"

Her face turned livid, her eyes, furious with anger, with almost disdain, flashed on him in silence, and again both their

minds surged round that soldier of other days.

He had to take her word, but something in the core of him had got a blow; he felt disturbed, upheaved, almost ready to question her emphatic denial. It was the first disturbance in their married life, it left traces on them both—she more nervous, more alarmed, more certain of the terrible rupture that would come if anything came out; he only half satisfied and unsure. He believed in his children, and over his entire mind came a shadow as it were of that long ago day when he doubted the girl of his heart. He knew not why, nor could he explain, yet the old sensations suffused him, and the very presence of Deloney seemed about him.

He turned to leave the room. She went after him, and put

her arms up piteously.

"Willie, have you no faith in me after the years we have been man and wife?"

"No faith!" he muttered; "I think it is because my faith is so very great, expects so much, believes so much in you that such a suggestion maddens me."

Her eves filled with tears as she looked up at him, and he

put his arm round her and kissed her cheek.

After a light breakfast they rode out with Lamont, Molly feeling too restless to keep at home, anxious somehow to be

present while Lamont was with her husband.

As they cantered off she kept up a running chat until the young man was charmed out of the semi-dulness that the almost accident of the morning had put over him. He regretted more and more that he could not bear them company in their home-going. They passed merrily through the picturesque little fishing hamlet where Deloney had secured apartments, and even now was engaged with his arm out of that noticeable sling, writing, or trying to write to his father and mother.

Crawford was more silent than usual; he could not be himself so soon after a scene with his wife, but as they neared Cape Town they met people whom they knew at every step, and the constant exchange of courtesies diverted his thoughts. They had lunch in the Prince George Hotel, and presently said good-bye to Lamont. It was a relief and joy to Molly; she hoped within her soul that that was the last of him. Crawford and she went through the town making a few calls, and then turned their horses homeward. They went full gallop as far as the road permitted, for Crawford fancied it was like rain. When it rains in Cape Colony it rains—no drip drizzle, shillyshally, but plain honest torrents. They galloped over heights and hillocks, along the rude, romantic way; the Belfast Boy could see his wife's cheeks scarlet with the exercise. She was a good horse-woman, he had taught her himself, and they had raced together over the open veldt often and often. She was able now to keep up with him, and their horses strained neck and neck to be abreast as they sped through the gathering gloom. Upon the left rose up the mountains, sheer, dark, sullen; on the right the ocean, a dark swelling mass, the waves had ceased to ripple, the surface was as smooth as glass; every little motion was repressed as if merging secretly their puny power into one billow that would leap skyward, then burst

with ungovernable fury along the coast and over the vessels anchored in Simon's Bay. The atmosphere was full of the same sullen calm, unbroken even by the weird wheep of the wild sea-birds, for they, knowing by their keen instinct of the

rain, had retired to their eyries in the rocks.

Molly reined in her horse slightly to look about, the love of the splendid was keen within her; the stretch of ocean with its calm grey face, its throbbing invisible heart was grand. loved it, it was a mystery, full of gigantic untrammelled strength, a monarch who feared no foe, and laughed ironically at the puny power of man.
"Willie," she called, "look, it's grand."

"Yes, yes," he returned, carelessly, "come on, the storm is upon us. How unfortunate we did not bring your rain-cape."

She did not answer; it jarred on her slightly that he did not follow her feeling, but she was wiser than let him divine that "If you get a wetting," said Crawford, really concerned,

"it shall be serious."

Her eyes were still upon the ocean which had begun shooting up into the air like artificial fountains, and breaking in showers of phosphor in mid-air. They sped on like the wind over the rude ground, her white horse distinct and weird in the deep over-dropping gloom; and now the horses smell the rain, and snort loudly as they fly forward, and presently the large drops come spurting down.

"Willie, the feather in my hat shall be ruined; could you

get it out?"

"Botheration feather. Here is my coat, button it round your shoulders," and he put it into her hands.

"It's a gorgeous feather, I'll never have such another." He had got her this feather himself from a big ostrich farm far up country on the very verge of the desert, and Molly was

vastly proud of it.

"Come on," he called, alarmed lest the heavy rain would lay her up with fever. He himself had been wet to the skin often and often by the fearful dews and the heavy torrential rain, but how would his tender delicate wife stand it? They dashed on through the heavy drops, heedless of the gutter-sand their horses' feet sent flying round them. The brutes flew onward, the steam rising in clouds from their backs, the froth hanging on their jaws. The road was now only a foot track, narrow, uneven, ugly, they had to go singly, Crawford in front directing her against this and that dirty bit of ground. It was now pitch dark, without even a star; they seemed to be rushing through black space; the roar of the ocean was like a thousand cannons as it burst and dashed and broke over the immovable rocks; the rain hissed, falling in sheets, beating one like a whip, and filling one's ears with heavy peculiar buzz.

Molly was breathless, the water was streaming over the wide hat down her neck and face, it was like pawing the very sea riding through such rain. As they neared the cliffs the thunder of the sea was tremendous, tossing its white arms into the dense air like a wild despairing being, the very ground beneath them shook under the fearful onslaught of the beating billows.

Presently the lights thin and yellow of their own house pierced the gloom. Crawford called out cheerily, "We're home, Molly. Are you all right, do you see the lights?"

She did not reply, but looking up at his voice she started violently, and her horse plunged at the sudden tug of the ribbons. Between her husband and herself something—someone had intervened, emerging from the shelter of the cliffs. A wild fear, an oppression, a certainty, seized her that is indescribable; she knew and felt who was there, but she rode gal-

lantly forward.

Deloney had been loitering about the whole evening, drawn as it were by magnetic chords to her house. The storm came on, and caught him, yet still he waited, hoping by it to gain an entrance into her house. But as yet he had not dared to approach it. Now here she came, and he was not going to be balked; her white horse pranced proudly, and through the gloom he fancied she sat erect. He approached quickly in the face of the plunging brute. Molly had calmed with the calmness of despair and defiant defeat, her hands were like clutches of steel upon the ribbons.

"Erin, Erin," she breathed; "on, on, good horse."

Deloney leapt to the animal's head, and caught the bridle; had the rider not been a good seat she was undone, the brute plunged, reared slightly, but responded to the voice of her rider, dragging Deloney with her.
"Madalina, I am drenched to the skin; you will give me

shelter."

She laid her leash, her pretty gold-headed leash across his

hand with her whole might; he did not lessen his grip, the blow only made him tighten his hold.

"Your husband," he went on, "does not know me; let me in

out of the storm; it is two miles to the inn.

Her lips set firmly, she made a slight movement, immediately a flash ran through the black rain, it lit up the intruder's face for one flying instant, and played among his black hair. A report half-choked by the hissing rain and roaring ocean broke forth; it was from her dainty little pistol that she had learned to carry on the veldt for fear of wild animals. Her horse was free, and sprang away into the night.

Crawford had wheeled his horse, and was calling loudly, but Erin flew past him like a weird, bewitched thing, never pausing until at her own paddock, panting, breathless, trembling in every limb, the smoke rising from her dripping limbs; she threw back her head proudly, and her eye flamed like

fire, proud of having done her duty.

Klass was waiting, but before he had lifted his mistress from the saddle the millionaire himself dashed up. He leapt off the saddle, and going forward to his wife, she fell prone

into his arms.

### CHAPTER XIII.

SHE was in hysteria, out of one fit into another, the terrible impression of blood was upon her, in that mad moment she had seen by the pistol flash a scar upon his brow open, and the blood gush over his face. She had heard the heavy splashy thud as he dropped into the gutter; had she killed him in the very presence of her husband? He deserved it. but it was terrible that her hand dio it. In a few hours the police would come, she would be branded not only in Crawford's eyes, but in the eyes of the whole country. And her children, Oh, God! her children, and she shivered anew, and her whole being became sulfused with horror. morning she recovered slightly to find the doctors bending over her, and her husband aside in the room, his face pale and distressed

"Are you better, Molly?"
"Yes," she murmured faintly, and presently under the influence of a sedative dropped asleep. Her physician little deemed how near she was to that terrible malady that had once assailed her, that disease to which death is as nothing. She slept long and deeply, it brought relief and calmness, and when she came out of it she had sheered that awful disease. and was able to throw some light on what had occurred. Erin shied, and she herself thought someone or something, perhaps a wild beast was moving towards her, and had fired. Had she lost her whip, or Willie's coat? No, both were safe. The whip had been in her hand in a death-like grip, and had had to be forced from it.

"I am so glad nothing is lost," she smiled, and it was the

truth.

The doctor's orders were very definite. No excitement, nothing in any way to ruffle or disturb her; she was a very nervous and highly strung person, the shock had shook her system through and through.

As the doctor sat with her she asked him if there had been

any accidents from the storm. There had been many, but an inkling of the item she desired was not forthcoming, but

she dare go no further.

Crawford hung about her like a great devoted boy carrying ice, chocolate, fruit, cake, running her little errands, feeling himself very useful indeed. The packing up which had been abandoned slightly, began again. Letters, invitations, presents began to pour in, for it had got wind that they were going to the old country, but Mrs. Crawford's health would not permit a round of suppers and parties and visits, and Crawford was made write pretty little notes that made his fingers cramp much worse than handling a mallet. The last lingering days crept away without visitors, without fuss, without society, just simply living together with themselves and their children. Yet Mrs. Crawford could not breathe freely, she longed intensely to get aboard the ship, longed to feel safe, longed to be away—away—away—away—

Was she afraid of the blood that bought her respite?—the blood that might cry from the gutter track along Simon's Bay. They were leaving without farewells of any kind, the fact was known throughout the society of Cape Town; it was talked of everywhere, yet there was not half the sensation as if they had gone out among their friends. The Belfast Boy left a letter with his solicitor, to be delivered to the Governor the day after they left. It contained a cheque for several thousand pounds as a gift to the destitute of Cape Colony. This was Molly's idea. The millionaire had wanted to build an hospital or a church to testify his gratitude to both God and men for his success in South Africa, but his wife pointed out that people would say he did that to advertise himself, and reminded him to give secretly, and God would reward him openly—so the cheque went with the modest request that his name might be withheld.

The day came at length when they were to look their last on the gorgeous country of desert, mountain and torrent. Happiness, success, and wealth had beamed on them. Both were disturbed as they stood arm in arm on deck, and the ship crept out from the pier into the seething billows. Crawford could not but compare the poor runaway with the proud position he now held. His every ambition had been realised, and the girl he had loved so tenderly and truly was now his wife, and he glanced at her with conscious pride. A

throb of gratitude, a deep, unuttered prayer rose within the man's soul, piercing cloud and sun and star, and on, on, on to the Great Infinite Spirit Who doeth as He listeth in the realms of men. He was thankful, he was not unmindful of the great things that had fallen to his lot, and he traced them to Him in humble reverent gratitude.

Presently he was aware his wife was shivering. "Shall we

go below my darling, it is too cold for you."

He spoke gently, softly, his voice gathering pathos from his own communings. She looked up at him, the great Fear that lurked in her eyes passing almost from them under the influence of his tone, under the consciousness that her escape was made good. That horrible vision of a face, flared up by pistol light in the darkness, bloody and strained must be forgotten, buried darkly in the Black Man's Land—no longer the terrible nightmare, of the police, of the public brand, the guilt, the shame, mayhap the scaffold. She was away to the magnificent wide world, she—the wife of the nullionaire was beyond and above the finger of scorn and blame.

And the waves beat on the ship's sides, the steady hills, the great plateau and the beetling cliffs were further and further behind. A glow of triumph, a fire gleam in her brilliant eyes as she went below on her husband's aum. She had won

her Bethel under the very eyes of her pursuer.

## CHAPTER XIV.

DELONEY lay tossing, tossing, tossing in a little stuffy room in the inn of the little fishing village. He was down with enteric, it had been a terrible night for him that night that Madalina laid him in the gutter at her feet. How long he lay in the slime, with the rain beating into him, and his torn, bleeding brow open to the elements, he could not tell. When he came to himself he was still lying there, the storm beating in its fullest fury upon him. He managed to stagger to his feet, to grope his way over to the cliffs, to crouch against

them until the dawn broke.

Scarcely conscious he made his way to the little inn—here another battle for his life began. The doctors did everything, but his chance was not worth a halfpenny. As he wrestled out there in the small inconvenient place, Lady Winnie wrestled and fought with her anxiety and uncertainty. What had become of him? He had not left the country, he would not treat her so. In spite of their last meeting he would not do such a mean thing. She hung about every place he was likely to be, she made inquiries in every quarter, still his whereabouts remained a mystery. Instinct, presentiment, something assured her it was going ill with him, yet her every effort was baffled. Where was he? What could be amiss was the constant question that beat about her hour by hour and night by night.

One day she went out again in search of him. She was almost ready to give up. As she wandered through the town it occurred to her to go the way she had seen the yellow haired woman take, so she struck the road to Simon's Bay. As she walked out into the wild loneliness, lost in her reflections, first one then another doctor's carriage passed her. Her colour heightened, her flagging steps quickened, the love great in her deemed that she was on the right way. He was ill, he was alone, he was among strangers who cared not whether he lived or died, whose one concern was to get the

trouble of him from about their place. Ah, the cold, cold breath of the stranger, the loveless touch of the paid hand, the careless glance of the hired eye when the pain intensifies! Who has not winced at these things? Who has not known even in delirium the difference between our own and the

stranger?

Lady Winnie pushed on. When she entered the little village knots of people were hanging round doors, their conversation was anent the gentleman in the inn. One doctor had given him up, another had said when he had withered so long he would pull through. It was strange, he had only engaged the rooms in the inn the very day before. He had come in, in the early dawn, covered with blood and gutters, and reeling with illness.

Lady Winnie took in the situation at once with that sure, unerring instinct of the soul; she did not doubt who was ill. She went forward into the inn, inquired for Lieutenant Deloney, proclaimed herself his sister, and that she had heard

he was ill and had come out to see.

Her intention was to have him removed to hospital or to her own apartments, but when she entered the sick room and saw Deloney her heart faltered. Removal was impossible. It could not be thought of.

He lay on the pillow panting, his brow swathed in bandages, the perspiration hailing out of every pore. He was unconscious, and moved his hands helplessly about the

counterpane.

As Lady Winnie gazed his lips moved, he muttered thickly, but every word was lost save one, the name, the hated name,

dropping in wierd agony from his burning lips.

She had come to stay, to nurse him, to do her best, to see the last of him as she verily believed. The doctors came, they welcomed the woman's hand, their patient was safer, and his chance not so slender with a tender watching eye

ever on the alert.

Presently she found herself in the midst of her task, it was no easy one. The nursing, though severe, was as nothing to the fearful, terrible temptation that assailed her hour by hour. He raved, he talked, he beseeched, he entreated, "Madalina, Madalina!" His very innermost heart seemed to uncover under the woman's eyes. She had to fight herself to conquer that terrible desire to run, to leave him to his fate;

yea, the tempter whispered she had only to delay the medicine, to let the hour pass, and he, this man who loved that other woman, would die. Why should she nurse him for another? Why, if he would not have her, if his heart to her were cold and hard as the adamantine rock? Yet, under that influence, stronger than jealousy, greater than hate, "terrible as an army with banners," his medicine hour was never passed, his pillows were smoothed, his lips were cooled, his throbbing temples were bathed, all that love could do was done; and it would have been beautiful to her to do it but for the dark consciousness that he did not love her, and it was more beautiful in her doing it, with that hopeless knowledge beating in her bosom.

So the days crept in, weary, suffering, hopeless days, full of dark and pain, and Deloney gradually came back to himself, back to the terrible certainty that Madalina had raised her hand against his life, that only accident or providence

had saved him, had saved her.

He felt no anger towards her, no, no, only that craving for her, that terrible longing that nothing could stifle; it had swept over him like a torrent that day that he loitered so long anear her house. As he thought and thought of her, his eyes wandering round the little room fell upon the Lady Winnie.

Then his doctor came in and congratulated him and told him plainly that he owed his life to his nurse; the woman he could not have had given him back his life. Winnie, poor Winnie, dear Winnie, yes, she had laid an everlasting obliga-tion upon him, poor Winnie. He was sorry for her, he could never repay such an act, anything that he could offer her in return was only dross, common metal, while she had poured about him the frankincense of devotion, that beautiful, precious ointment that wells sweetest from a woman's heart. Poor Winnie, poor, poor woman, the pity of it all! He wondered why his soul could not beat to hers, why the flame of lambent fire that burned her breast could not kindle his own? Then to his vision rose another, beautiful as the morning in her innocent youth, gazing with rapt eyes into his very soul, love, true and unadulterated, beaming in her countenance. He had never got from that, the spell, the enchantment of it was upon him still. In the light of what had passed between that moment and now he saw more vividly, more truly, that that great uplifting, inspiring, blending of soul to soul was the linest feeling in the breast of man. The best and highest in him harked back to his love, to her who had been his own, and whom he always

thought of as still his own.

He called Lady Winnie to him, he was very gentle, he was very kind. She listened with trembling lips and bent eyes to his thanking. Never once did her drooped eyes lift, all he said, all he could say was as it were ashes scattered before her. What she wanted was not his to give, it had passed from him, it was buried in her of the yellow hair, the woman who eschewed him, who had passed beyond the trammels of his affection. He stood with her—the yellow haired one, as she with him, but he being a man might woo again to win. She knew that hope was living in him, was bearing him on, dividing him and her more and more, she would wait on, perhaps she would live to see this hope blasted within him, perhaps something would slay it.

While he spoke kindly, planning her future, pouring out his gratitude, she was thinking with almost savage intensity that if only this thing would wither in him he might take her in his

arms, he might be hers again.

It was arranged that she should choose where to go, and although her lips were silent her choice was already made. She would go to Belfast, it was his native place; now that his elder brother was dead he would perhaps leave the Army and settle there. She would go to Belfast and see what turn things took. He was bound to come there, and there she

would go.

In a little while she set sail for England, and presently while he was still in South Africa Lady Winnie made back to the Linenpolis. Deloney wrote home almost before he was fit to hold the pen that he would be home next ship. His coming made a delightful stir in the Hall. It was a very different house from the one he left. Over the entire household the shadow had been cast, that strange indescribable dulness that the death of the first born brings lay upon everbody and everything. Mab, too, was gone, taking with her that delicious presence of young womanhood which is ever so charming in a household.

The father and mother were stricken, wounded with a

wound that in this world could never heal.

Amid this dreariness flourished the young wild olive, a dashing, mischievous, hearty child, beautiful as a picture and

deeply loved by the household.

When Deloney's ship came home he sent no further word, but just travelled home quietly; consequently, when he reached Belfast the family carriage was not there to meet him. He took a car, glad indeed to feel himself once more on a good Irish jaunting car, and drove home. He gave the jarvey his fare, ran lightly up the steps and rang the bell.

A few minutes before this little John had been in the library with grandpa, torturing him with questions concerning "Uncle Denny." Was he just the very same as Uncle Victor? Grandpa told him to be quiet, but John insisted. The end of it was grandpa put him out of the room, his face very

red indeed.

John got very red, too; he was perfectly certain he was not naughty, and would not cry for being snubbed undeservedly. But he was not finished with his question, he took it to Rob, the old coachman, who was now hall dignitary, being too old to stand the inclemency of the box. Rob was assuring the child that Uncle Denny was exactly the same as Uncle Victor, when the quick pull of the bell necessitated him to put John off his knee and open the door. John ran behind him and stood back in silence a minute while Rob exclaimed:

"The Lord bliss us, it's Masthor Denny, hisself."

"Hope you're well and hearty, Rob," said the Lieutenant, shaking his hand warmly.

John, who was not by any means bashful, came forward, quite satisfied it was his turn now, and very glad indeed that

Uncle Denny had come.

The gentleman flushed slightly, perhaps under momentary surprise. He always thought of the child as the little rolled up bundle of white clothes. He was somewhat taken to see the fine handsome boy, so like, so unmistakably like his mother, save for those big, flashing black eyes.

He did not doubt for a moment the child's identity, the little one looked full into his face.

"So you are Uncle Denny?"

The gentleman took him up into his arms and laid his lips amongst his beautiful golden curls.

"Hullo, youngster," he said lightly, but his voice sounded

peculiar, with a queer ring in it that had never inflated it before. Old Rob turned his head aside and wiped his eyes. The old man loved this little child although he worried him. John had learned to bring his troubles and griefs to Rob, and Rob soothed them and told him stories of the horses, big, wild, snorting brutes that he used to drive, and sometimes John fell asleep dreaming Rob's wild horses were carrying him away like the wind.

When Lieutenant Deloney passed on into the library to his father, John was left outside on the corridor, whereupon he darted after Rob who was hurrying down the stairway to the servants' hall with the news. John sprang upon the old man's back, to the almost collapse of both, and thus they

made their debut below stairs.

John took the honour of the occasion upon himself, and repeated the entrance scene at the front door amid various looks and smiles, told them Uncle Denny was come, that he

kissed him and said: "Hullo youngster."

During the recital he kept time with his heels upon Rob's ribs. Then a big Newfoundland dog, which Uncle Victor had given him as a present, and was his very own, came marching in. John descended from his throne, hugged the dog saving grandly: "Hullo youngster, you're Uncle Denny's, come."

The dog wagged his tail, looked very philosophical, and he and his master made a charge into the kitchen garden,

ing and the second of the seco

both thoroughly elated.

#### CHAPTER XV.

MEANWHILE, the Crawfords are upon the Continent doing the wonderful old cities of Italy, pausing with dim awe that was half reverence at the broken temples of Paganism, and at the blasted grandeur of Pompeii. What more delightful to the atuned spirit, than to dally in grand old Italy with its pagan mysticism, its Christianism, leaving their unmistakable imprint on the charming landscapes, the gorgeous gardens, chiselled images, sparkling fountains, and leafy waysides?

Those art galleries, those museums, wonderful, magnificent, almost staggering in their inimitable realism. As Mrs. Crawford drank at these deep waters of beauty and art, one subject began to thrust itself more and more upon her mind—Jesus; the paintings of this Man were everywhere, from the manger to the Cross, from the Cross to the Sepulchre, from the Sepulchre?—Ah! even Art stood abashed, had drawn back, had laid her brush down before the stupendous Life which

opened the sepulchre to enter the Holy of Holies.

The presence of the Man seemed everywhere, the Man she had heard preached of far away in the old church up Shankhill, and at the street corners of Belfast. The feeling grew upon her until betimes she fancied Him at her side, and she shrank and shrank, beseeching Him by her very motions to depart. Once the Figure stood in the doorway of her apartment; she looked again, well knowing no person could be there, yet there He stood and she saw Him—colossal, mild, magnificent, with a dark flowing robe; His white face soft and yearning, and framed in darkest auburn hair. As she gazed, the large mild fawn-like eyes blazed like lightning as it were over her whole life; she cowered, she winced, she fell, with the unspoken wish written large upon her countenance, "Depart, depart, DEPART from me."

It was an awful experience; close upon it they moved on to France, but here, even here in Infidel France, the Man of Galilee was everywhere. His paintings, His sculpture, His

churches, His presence, His magnetic influence, His Life that cannot die. The woman who dared to raise her pistol against another human being quailed before Him, yet in His name sent her poor prayers to God Almighty.

As they walked the boulevards of Paris, and mingled in its brilliant crowds, and drank the cool pitchers of Rue St. Denis and Rue Aux Fers, the admired, the envied of all, the beautiful wife of the millionaire was feeling after, or

retreating from this conscious Presence.

Everything was so beautiful; man's realm was too divine for it to be other than planned by the Divine. The image of the Maker seemed reflected in lake and fountain, in sunlight and in flower and dazzling star. This God-made world, so beautiful was at her feet, she had personal beauty, wealth, her husband, her children, few could boast such things, and

vet-and vet-

This Man of Galilee was to reckon with: and the man whose face with its ruptured bleeding brow, lit up by her pistol fire, he too was to be reckoned with alive or dead. How it had gone with him she knew not, one thing only was she sure of now, her safety. The millionaire's wife was safe, life was a summer, no snows of poverty, no winds of chilled affection, nothing but flowers, and light, and warmth, and the voices of little ones who called her mother, and yet-and vet-the Future menaced her. Heaven would be on earth; if only the Past, if only the Future had nothing to reveal,

nothing to give an account of either to God or man.

They lingered fairly long in France, Mrs. Crawford entering more into society than had been her wont. She wore the honours of wealth with a dignity becoming blue blood. The English visitors sought Crawford's society, and the gallant French paid homage to the lady's beauty. The millionaire cared for none of these things, but they pleased Molly, and he let her do as she pleased; but his own candid opinion was that sight-seeing was the most fatiguing, tiresome job a man ever tackled. The big picture galleries, the old, old churches became to his tired eyes all alike; he saw nothing but walls of colours, rooms of sculpture, old musty churches where the sunlight never shone. Often he waited outside while his wife feasted to her heart's content. He was always glad to get back to their apartments, to his little children.

Many long sunny hours he had with them, he told them

how he used to work on the Queen's Island, where the big ship that brought them from Africa was made, that the men seethed out of the big gates like smoke out of a big chimney, that it was the very finest sight in the world to see those hundreds and tens of hundreds of men turning out home on an evening after a day's hard work. The lad looked wistfully in his father's face and said: "I will be a carpenter when I grow a man."

The millionaire had a little kit of tools made, and the child and he made wonderful chairs and stools and tables and cradles for Ruby's dolly; thus passed in pleasant company and content to the Belfast Boy the long continental tour; but he wanted home, the feeling of being from home was perhaps more acute in France, where the language was so bewildering

than at the Goldfields of South Africa.

They moved on over to London. It was glorious to feel oneself on English soil again, to hear good Queen's English, although in a different accent from the dear old Ulster

brogue.

They had to do London; there was much to see, perhaps just as much to interest these Belfast people as the Continent had to show. Mrs. Crawford was determined if possible to make London her home. There were many London people she had met on the Continent; the intimacy was renewed, and before long she was plunged into a whirl of gaiety. She liked to lose herself, to forget everything, especially that strange queer feeling about Christ that had grown upon her before those old rare masterpieces on the Continent. One day in the midst of this new fashionable life, where wealth, Fashion and the pride of Life vied with each other for the palm of victory she went with a few other ladies to the National Gallery.

It was strange, it was passing strange she was striving in her secret heart not to see Him, not to look at one canvas of Him, she almost succeeded until in the Doré Gallery—ah—there He was turned away, going out from the presence of Pilate, going too from herself. What strange upheaval awoke within her, a sort of spiritual horror at the darkness of His absence, an indescribable queer triumph that His Company was done away. She wanted Him away, but she dare not let Him go: the cost, the terrible cost was too high, her soul yearned after that departing Figure Whose face was turned

away, yet which, to her mental vision was strangely familiar—majestically mild, holding her with eyes of Flaming Purity.

She shivered and went away, but the Fashion of Life somehow lost its grip after that visit to the Doré Gallery. Her

soul often asked itself, "Is He away? Is He away?"

Again the feeling of the brooding Presence came upon her, and she almost expected to see Him bodily. As she went in and out among the great people of London she came in contact with the greatest ladies in the land-ladies who took some interest in factory girls and slumdom, and tried to do a little good on society's lines. Mrs. Crawford went down to some of their meetings in humble quarters. Strange feelings awoke as she found herself before an audience to which she was not altogether a stranger. The marks and tokens of the London factory girls were much similar to those at home. As she gazed at their colourless cheeks, at their curled hair and their flashing eyes that summed up correctly the ladies before them, at the smiles lurking in the corner of their lips, at the joyous shine that kindled up their faces when the meeting was over, because their John was waiting at the corner, Mrs. Crawford, the great millionaire's wife, was moved almost to tears. Did she envy those girls their real jolly, whole-hearted grasp of things, their want of sham, their simple undisguised delight in the little pleasures of their narrow circle?

Ah! she could half wish for the old time when she was a mill girl, and "her boy," the working man on the Island: then, oh then, the rosy future, the golden days that lay before, had borne her forward as on eagle's wings—no precipice, no

shadow, no calamity, loomed ahead.

The factory girls of London got a treat such as they had seldom had. A great hall was put into the hands of decorators

and made fit for a king's banquet.

Mrs. Crawford told her friends that she meant to honour her guests by wearing her very happiest gown, and she came with her husband and a company of ladies and gentlemen dressed superbly in gleaming cream satin, covered with priceless lace. In her golden hair sparkled a diamond tiara that flashed like shining stars. She mingled among her guests chatting to them, smiling on them, giving them the opportunity to glower at her to their heart's content. Few of them ever saw the great ladies who came among them, dressed, but Molly knew that they would enjoy seeing the beautiful gown much

more than the dainty confections served to them; so she had come dressed; and many of those poor girls carried the vision of her, in her magnificent beauty and gorgeous dress to their

dying day.

There were artists there to sing, but no song got the hearing that the one from the brilliant hostess did. As her husband looked at her and listened, that voice thrilled through him; the shining dress, the glittering diamonds, the full maternal beauty faded from before him; he seemed to hear, to see Molly in her muslin gown standing away up Shankhill at Glencairn corner singing under the summer stars, to their comrades and to himself, a working Belfast Boy.

He was pining for Home, to see the old places, the old city, the Island, the place where he was reared; in spite of the ordeal he might have to face he wanted to go. Molly always enlarged on that old murder, she pointed out how unpleasant it would be for the children, the nasty odour of it would cling

to them and to themselves.

She talked and talked, but somehow she missed her aim. Instead of making him reluctant to go forward his mind gradually became familiarised with the very worst that could happen. Without his wife's knowledge he consulted an eminent London solicitor. The legal gentleman gave him heart, and told him that he would study the case thoroughly, and examine the evidence, in the meantime to make his mind easy. But over in Belfast an affair was taking place that was to forestall the solicitor, and leave the way open for the Belfast Boy to return openly and honourably.

It was curious the first intimation he got of it was in the public press. Since they had been in London he always read the Ulster newspapers. One evening, sitting down to his "Belfast Weekly," he suddenly saw a heading that was arresting. His pulses throbbed, the great vein stood out upon his forehead, his heart rose up within him, his blood tingled.

## CHAPTER XVI.

THESE Belfast papers had been in one sense disappointing to Crawford. They talked of places, churches, halls, streets, avenues, warehouses, mills, etc., that he had never heard of. He forgot that in the flying years the little city at the hill-foot had wrought herself into one of the great commercial centres of Great Britain. But in the paragraph that he now perused he was well acquainted with names and localities, dates and facts.

Every word lightened a curious burden he had carried all

these long years since that dread night of the Riots.

The bloody scene left its awful trace of suspicion upon him. Now he was cleansed, he was free, he could tread his native soil unsoiled in the eyes of the Law, in the eyes of men. The Law now had no charge to lasso him with, he was his own

man again.

He could have laughed aloud, he could have cheered, but he simply sat still and read the paragraph over again. He had not been unhappy during the years, for neither his God nor his conscience could lay this sin to his charge; yet a strange uplifting sense of freedom and delight coursed through and through him. Perhaps he was thinking of his little children, perhaps the ordeal of a new trial that had thus been averted. The man's heart enlarged within him with intense relief and joy. One of the participators in that fray that ended so terribly had come to his last gate. Before taking it he had told his clergyman everything. That gentleman brought a magistrate and a solicitor, and the dying man made his declaration on oath. He told the story of the crime bluntly and crudely, vindicating the young man Crawford absolutely. He begged mercy for not speaking at the time. Fear had made him play the coward.

He revealed also the names of two others who were still living, who could prove his statements, and bear him out in

the fact that the man the crime was blamed on, had nothing

to do with it, and was innocent.

Mrs. Crawford was awaiting her husband for afternoon tea in the next apartment; he seldom kept her waiting. In a way he looked on her as a larger, bigger child, whom it was his duty to humour and to obey, but this evening he lingered a moment fascinated by the paper.

He took it with him in to tea. Molly was busy with the

cups; he looked at her with a broad and genial smile.

"I have news Molly."

"Good news?" she queried.

"The best."

Then he showed her the paragraph, standing over her and reading it again over her shoulder. It was something neither of them expected. His face shone, but the colour flashing in her checks faded, and a white, ghastly hue seemed to gather round her mouth.

Her great excuse, her unsurmountable reason against going back to Belfast was done away. She lay back on the chair and folded her white hands, the ruby ring gleaming on her finger flashed into her eyes. She looked at it, and somehow in its blazing depths she thought she saw a little child with glittering black eyes, and curls of gold. A sense of faintness came over her and she rose abruptly.

Belfast was dangerous, too dangerous for her to face. That child with her face would be hard to vanquish, harder even than Deloney himself. Her husband might discredit him for

he knew his calibre, but the child—the child—

Her hands moved about helplessly as if seeking something to clutch at; then sitting down again as abruptly as she had risen, she poured out some tea and drank it greedily. A fearful shiver was upon her; its intensity was overpowering. Her husband put his arm around her shoulder.

"There is nothing now, my dearest, to mar our return, or

to delay it."

"I knew it would come right in the end. God could not let me lie for ever under such a charge. Molly, no one but He knew how I felt it."

She lifted her hot burning eves to his, they were wet with tears, her glance fell, she saw he was deeply moved, and tried to speak, but the voice died in her husky throat; but he put his arms round her and his tears fell among her shining hair.

He began to speak again of Belfast, and presently she reminded him of the dinner-party they were to attend that evening. He did not much enjoy these gatherings, but to-night he did. The prospect of their termination made it less of an infliction than usual. As he mingled among the throng of gaiety and high life, his mind was ever recurring to the past, the buoyant feeling that upheld him was splendid, he was in very feeling a boy again. As his eyes fell upon Molly it seemed almost a surprise, Molly—his Molly, a brilliant, fashionable beauty, shining like some magnificent mould of Psyche suddenly inflated with life and warmth and sparkle. Her dress was some white sheeny silken stuff gleaming and clinging to her tall figure in soft folds. She wore no ornaments, no lace, nothing but this long exquisite gown, and a few choice flowers in her bosom and in her hair. The simplicity of the style seemed to give her statuesque beauty a subtle enthralling charm.

She sang a little, played a little. As she sat at the piano the brace of red diamonds on her finger lit up her appearance. Several ladies who had met her previously, whispered, "That is Mrs. Crawford's engagement ring;" she never leaves it off her finger. The little whisper passed about, and many curious eyes glanced at the ruby heart, which seemed to gather fire

under the scrutiny.

After a little they leave. Mrs. Crawford had done nothing another lady might not have done, yet in some mysterious way sne was the star of the evening, the apple of the gods was given her. It seemed strange withal, that the girl who was once a public spinner over there in Belfast could mingle thus among the daughters of the oldest nobility in the kingdom. Occasions like these force in upon a woman that she is fair. She had known it for many years, but to-night as she stood before her mirror she studied herself afresh.

"The gift of beauty," she murmured, "is much, but the power is more. Have I the power? Some women with less beauty could keep a man against as large odds, but can I? "Molly," she continued, addressing the image in the mirror,

"you have to keep him in spite of everything"

She rang for her maid, but before the girl arrived her husband opened the door and came in. He was very tired,

the excitement in himself had used him out. As he looked at his wife in the softened lights, her gleaming robes shining, and the soft peach colour flickering in her cheeks, she appeared to him like a beautiful dream. To-night he had got as it were a new insight, a fresh comprehension of the matchless beauty of his wife.

"Molly," he said, looking her over, "Molly, I was proud of you to-night."

At such a time such words were worth more than a king's crown. She nestled against him, for she loved him with all the depths and passion of her soul. Her maid came and he went away, but the beautiful incense of his visit remained.

The weeks crept in and still they were in London; they had not yet exhausted the show places of the Queen of the Mrs. Crawford was still going out a great deal, burying herself in the pleasures and gaieties of the great city. The Belfast Boy was bored intensely, but his wife's eloquent eyes browbeated in their gentle way his wishes. Against his own inclination he found himself filling his rooms at the hotel with the fashionable, the distinguished and the great, and going in turn to their houses and their clubs. this could not go on, he was sick at heart of it, and thinking long for a sight of his own little Irish Athens.

Molly saw with her clever eyes that it would be madness to thwart him openly, but in her pretty wifely way she held him back, her wishes, her engagements reined him in. How gladly would she have permitted him to go alone, but she dare not propose such a thing; but she did ask him to take a house in London; he laughed in her face. "Wild horses," he said, "would not keep me in London; I will take no house till

at home."

But although wild horses might not have kept him his wife did, and without his guessing she was manipulating the reins that held him, but she was well aware it could not last much She dreaded this return to Belfast, some secret

prompting in her soul whispered dismay.

One morning, at their breakfast, Crawford was speaking of it; his letters were brought in, one was from South Africa. Crawford took it up pleased. He had a warm heart for the country that had showered her wealth on him; the letter was from Lamont. Mrs. Crawford glanced carelessly at the envelope, she knew the writing, it struck her as an evil omen.

It was strange that this young man had come across her path far away in South Africa, his presence had been the only shadow in her beautiful simple life. Somehow the letter revived in her memory that terrible moment when he assailed her upon her own door-step; and then that night when the blackness of hell fell around her, when his hand was upon her horse's bridle, and above the thunder of the billows kis voice broke on her ear. Oh God, it was terrible, in the very presence of her husband, and then—that flash—that wild deed of despair.

Her horse staggering and plunging at headlong speed—to death, death over the beetling cliffs. Her heart quailed waiting; the horse flung on—then blank—blank—blank until Willie's anxious voice awoke her, and she was in her own house, only—only—with blood upon her. Good God it was a

hideous safety.

It came back upon her with tremendous force as she sat there with the shadow of the future drawing near; her face grew grey, dark shadows came around lips and eyes, she was as it were paralyzed. She was better presently, to find her husband concerned and anxious kneeling by her side.

"My dearest, what is this?"

"Nothing, only a passing weakness."

"Have you felt it before?"

" Not often."

"And you have not told me," he said, in quiet reproach,

"You must see a doctor."

"There is no necessity," she said, but he pulled the bell-rope and ordered a doctor to be brought immediately. The physician could discover nothing the matter, the ailments of the body, not the metaphysics of the gone-by years, were his speciality. But he ordered quiet and rest, no excitement of any kind, for he saw the lady was super-sensitive and nervous to the extreme.

She had often wished her health would break; anything, no matter what, would be preferable to this return to Belfast.

If she could only die now, when his love was unshaken, when he knew nothing, when all was harmony between them, it would be sweet, but the Then that lay beyond daunted her, filled her with unspeakable fear, that "bourne from which no traveller returns" was hard to venture. The Belfast Boy was alarmed about his wife; he blamed himself for allowing

her out so much, and stopped at once the continuous round of gaiety. Their immediate return was postponed again owing to her health, nevertheless it was approaching steadily, and Crawford had his mind made up that when the spring advanced, and the weather became somewhat milder they

This letter from Lamont was buoyant and bright, such as a young undisappointed, hoping man can always write. had sold his property at the Goldfields and was coming on to England en route for Belfast. He hoped to see them very soon. If they had left London before his arrival he would meet them in Belfast. Then there came strings of messages to the children, and his warmest regards to Mrs. Crawford. He was full of haste and eagerness; the sacred promise was about to be fulfilled. Crawford recalled Louis' remarkable likeness to the Deloneys; he would have liked to have made some remark to Molly about it, but intuitively refrained. This subject seemed to hover as it were between them, yet never crossed their lips.

They waited in London until the chill of March passed, and the flashing glory of April was wakening up the world. Still they remained, and when Lamont reached London he found them still there. He now wore a moustache, his figure also had filled out, early manhood was advancing rapidly. As he came forward beaming with joy to greet Mrs. Crawford, the very heart within her sickened, it seemed almost that he stood

before her.

An invisible, yet tangible net seemed fettering her every step, for to crown his coming, some days after, her good. well-meaning husband asked young Lamont to join their family circle, so that they could travel together to the Black North-

an old name for Ulster.

# CHAPTER XVII.

LIEUTENANT DELONEY was living very easily and quietly at home. The hall had brightened up since his return, but withal it was not the same house. Mab was gone; his clever, scholarly brother gone; somehow the zest seemed to have passed from much that he had thoroughly enjoyed. He was not now so gay, yet very pleasant; a fast dog, but not a leader; a follower of Bacchus, but a far-off one. He never sought ladies' society, but he put himself to no trouble to avoid it. and when circumstances placed him there he was still the lowvoiced, pleasing gentleman, and many a woman did an hour's hero worship in her own room. He had a personal magnetism that was irresistible. There was perfume in the offering of his arm, there was poetry in his velvet-toned commonplace remark, that to most women was charming, yet only one woman could charm himself. The hope was in him still of her; he was revelling in it, waiting until Fate brought her to him again; he felt that they would meet again, that all was not over between them, that yet their hands would clasp.

Meantime the waiting was not so wearying because he had her child, his child—the beautiful living symbol of their love. How he cherished him; how he loved him! The heart within him enlarged and throbbed as his yearning eyes followed him. The child's illegitimacy was a thorn in his flesh; it stung him cruelly, it bled him inwardly; he trembled at the thought of the lad's entrance into life, at the Finger of Remark that would be pointed at him; but meanwhile they were very happy together, basking in each other's company. The little chap was intensely happy; never had he had such a chum. was able to speak freely to Uncle Denny, and to Uncle Denny it was refreshing to be with a little child, full of eagerness, sincerity, whole heartedness. He was so interested in kites, in tops, in butterflies, in the birds flying overhead, in his toys, in his pony and his dog. Denny was a little puzzled that even a child could be so taken with these small distractions: but life was so real, so full of joy, and sometimes of grief to this sparkling, brilliant, laughing boy. Oftentimes he carried the lad to the beautiful sculpture in the drawing-room. It pleased him to compare the child's perfectly-modelled features with the marble, as he had in his thought done Madalina's. So continuously did he do this that John became accustomed to it, and one day surprised him with the inquiry, "Was that his sweetheart?" On being told it was simply the carving of a sculptor he queried boldly, who was his sweetheart?

"I have none."

"None," repeated John, in surprise. "Gentlemen have all sweethearts," and John nodded wisely in the way he had seen grandpa nod. Uncle Denny laughed softly.

"It is a fact," said the child seriously. "It's a man's

fault."

Uncle Denny looked at the grave, innocent face. He was merely repeating parrot-like a remark grandpapa and a friend had made over their wine. He had been playing on the hearthrug with the kitten and swallowing every word, and having inherited that trait of his mother, memory he did not forget; but one circumstance had fixed this particular conversation on his mind. He took it into his head that he should have a sweetheart himself like other men. The next day Lady Lyle was visiting at the hall; he immediately decided her little daughter was the proper sweetheart for him, and asked her right away. The little girl had no objection, whereupon he took her into the drawing-room upon his arm and told the company with great gusto. John felt a man in real earnest that night.

"I've my sweetheart," he said to Uncle Denny, recalling

the incident.

"Have you?" said Uncle Denny, with elevated brows.

"Yes, I've Vevee Lyle."

And Uncle Denny thought, as he put his hand on the child's shining curls, that he did not break kin in the choice. John's nurse came for him to dress him for dinner. He was going this evening to dinner with the family, a treat for him, indeed, but he had a distinct dislike to be washed and combed; it seemed to the child they were for ever washing and washing him. He did not go too willingly this evening, because this conversation was not concluded to his satisfaction. Ultimately, he went with his head erect, and one hand

comfortably in his trouser pocket, after Uncle Denny's style. Formerly he had swung his arms like grandpa, but now Uncle

Denny was his pattern.

When the dressing ordeal was over John managed to slip out of the nurse's hand; he had a knack of slipping from her that no vigilance could master. Dinner was announced. John was not to be found. However, just as dessert was being brought in John arrived, his face flushed, his curls ruffled slightly, and his dainty little slippers soiled. He had only been a race through the garden and over the strawberry beds with his big dog, Shannagh. John was not the least put about over his appearance or his lateness; he didn't think it necessary even to apologize, but applied himself to custard and snow-apple heartily. Then he demanded cake. Uncle Denny, with a half-guilty look at his mother, helped him. John was delighted; he was in splendid form, and beamed round the table in radiance. He thought he would have a final solution of that problem he had been discussing when nurse came to dress him.

"Grandpa."

"Yes, my dear."

"What's the reason Uncle Denny has no sweetheart?" Silence fell. Mrs. Deloney's eyes were upon her plate. Uncle Denny coloured slightly, and dropped his eyes too;

the governor frowned. John was familiar with his grandpa's countenance.

"Grandpa, I'm not naughty; don't get cross. Mr. Winton says men have sweethearts. I've mine, Vevee Lyle's mine. Uncle Victor "-

"Hush, John, hush, have some prunes," and Denny helped

him to a great many.

"But shouldn't you have one?" persisted John.

"Of course," said Deloney, to satisfy and silence him.
"Grandpa," continued the child, looking down complacently at his plate, "you are cross to-day," whereupon he fell to the prunes, and the distressing topic closed.

## . CHAPTER XVIII.

LADY WINNIE was established in a pretty suburban villa. She did not annoy Lieutenant Deloney, and her remittance came regularly. She was pleased with all he did, the hope, now dead almost, then spurting up anew, had never forsaken the faithful little creature. Some day, some day, she told her poor, anxious, troubled heart. He came occasionally to see her, bringing her a few flowers, or sweets, or little trifle, and those her hungry heart fed upon, but neither word or look beyond the barest commonplaces passed between them.

The old linen prince was delighted at the marked improvement in his son. He believed within his very soul this was the answer to the prayers he had paid for. The pride of the old gentleman, the love and joy of the aged lady, were in their darling and only son. It was their secret united hope that he would leave the Army, marry and settle down among them

in the ordinary old-fashioned way.

One gentleman looked on Lieutenant Deloney coldly; in fact, the very barest acknowledgments passed between them—he was Sir Percy Lyle. A silent, impotent rage throbbed in this gentleman's bosom. The relation in which his wife stood to the family compelled Sir Percy Lyle to meet Deloney occasionally, but the bitterness was in his heart. Lieutenant Deloney bowed before it, because he knew that it was just. Neither of them was comfortable in the other's company, and some one of them effaced themselves, lest the tension might become too strained and break; but no word, no hint ever crossed the lips of either.

Meanwhile the Crawfords were readying for home, as Crawford always called this return to Belfast. He was in high spirits over it, elated beyond description; no man ever loved his native place more than this large-hearted, generous working-man who had risen to wealth. The many famous places they had visited to him were foreign; no place like home, no place had the old warm memories of home, sweet

anticipations of easy contentment, joy at seeing the familiar old hills, the jolly old Shankhill Road with its groups of "boys" hanging about in the evening after a hard day's work, free and easy, filled him. He had a hunger to see these things associated with his early life. There was no fear of the Law on his mind, no dread of the old charge; that was entirely done away. His solicitor had seen the affair through, and his name was legally and publicly cleansed from participation in that wild crime. Now he could return a rich and happy man. But not so his wife. No words could describe the inner terror, the dark forebodings of her soul, the dim, yet certain presentiment that she was entering into a cloud. She knew not how she would come out. Her keen, powerful imagination could not penetrate those dark, thick shadows; but true feminine instinct assured her she would be different, her future different, her whole life different. No wonder she shrank, no wonder every nerve, every thought writhed at this return home: Had she only known, perhaps she would never have faced it.

May had come with her warmth, her flowers, her birds, her vellow sunshine, and the earth was sweet with her scented breath. The day for the journey was decided. Before its actual approach Crawford consulted the doctor privately about his wife's health, and was assured that the journey would be rather a benefit than otherwise at such a delightful season of the year. So she was borne away on iron cars to Liverpool, and thence to the good old Galvanic that crossed the Channel

night by night in those long ago years.

Molly went below immediately, but the gentlemen remained on deck practically all night enjoying their cigars, and the pitching of the ship, and the yarns of the crew, and the cold,

stiff breeze off the Irish sea.

Molly sat beside her children. She heard their little prayers; she felt somehow as if they were dearer to her this night than they had ever been. As her eyes lay upon their calm sweet faces she would have given the whole world were it hers to be as they, full of faith in life, in man, in God. No secrets, no pasts between them and happiness, Here or Hereafter. Oh God! What could make her as a little child—blot out of her mind all the awful experiences through which she had lived? Cleanse the Future of Fear?

Silently, calmly, there beside her, was that Person looking

at her with great soft eyes of purity that seemed to light up her innermost, deepest heart, eyes that bared the Past, eyes that beheld the Present, eyes that quailed, yet drew her with their

clear burning intense Pureness.

She saw, she hung her head, the reproach, and the entreaty in that glance were hard to suffer. So she sat, while the boat plunged, and rocked, and heaved into the wild Irish waters. Feet hurried back and forward overhead, chains clanked, timbers creaked, the swish of the water was fearsome as it burst against the ship-sides, loud voices sounded and resounded above the noise of the sea-night.

The stewardess entreated Mrs. Crawford to go to bed, assuring her she would be better lying down, and that they would soon land. Land! Oh God! How was she to land? Wild as the sea was, it was calm compared to the unspeak-

able awful fear of the land.

She had promised Crawford to join him on deck as the ship entered Belfast Lough, so that they might see together the fine sight of the Lough and Harbour and surrounding country arraved in the gorgeous dress of May dawn. But it was impossible, she was unstrung and ill, and sent an apology. He was disappointed and vexed to hear she had not had a good night. He joined young Lamont, who was on deck, feeling that the delightful scene had lost half its charm because Molly was not seeing it with him. Nevertheless it was a real joy to see the homelands, his honest soul throbbed pleasantly.

The many countries he had visited had no scene like the old Lough, the familiar hill line flushed "In the first low

fleeting breath of waking day."

How familiar everything was. Here was Bangor, the Brighton of Belfast, there on the opposite shore, the grim old Carrickfergus Castle where Thurot the Frenchman forced his

way into the country.

Nearer and nearer came the good old Cave hill whose caves were like hollow eyes in the dawnlight. To the left lies Little Holywood; yonder is the bare old ruined church where Wesley preached. They creep on, now they are at Harland and Wolfe's, the manger of the big ships.

The Belfast Boy looked, heard once more the old beloved ringing twang as of a hundred horns. A mist gathered in his eyes, a lump rose in his throat, his hand went up to his hat, he lifted it silently. He felt like saluting an old, old

friend. His emotion was deep and real, he had spent many happy years on "the Island," he had grasped many a true hand, the warmest, kindliest hearts he had ever met were Islandmen, honest, working men, with little of the world's wealth, but much of the milk of human kindness flushing their veins.

He thought of his late master, that good kind gentleman who had stood by him in his darkest hour—he would have given much to have shaken his hand again, to meet his keen clear eyes in the open, to tell him of the fortune that befell him in the far land, to show him Molly, to show him his children, to thank him warmly for the deeds of other years. But Death—Death, the grim leveller, the great Silencer had swallowed every chance, had gripped him in his firm finger. The millionaire covered his eyes with his hand, knowing full well one of the sweets of home-coming could be never his. The steamer crawled on, now a little quicker, then presently she reached her berth; the longshore men caught the ropes and hauled her in.

They had touched Belfast at last.

A sort of contentment, a satisfaction that the wandering unsettled life was finished filled the Belfast Boy. Rest and home, and comfort were near at hand. He was glad, so glad, it was the very sweetest thing of many a day this being home again.

"Home, sweet home, there is no place like home."

### CHAPTER XIX.

THEY drove round to the Imperial Hotel, then the largest and most fashionable in Belfast. Mrs. Crawford strove to keep up, but it was plainly to be seen that the night had gone hard with her. Once they reached the hotel her husband made her retire at once, she was shivering cruelly on this bright May morning. As she lay calm and silent in her own room a dull quietness crept over her, a sort of dogged determination to do all in her power to save herself, to save her husband, to keep above and apart from the black years of Yesterday; yet somehow she felt that the truth was marching to meet her, that do what she might she could not turn it from her path.

The old brilliancy, the power, the nerve to dare seemed to have gone from her; every protest, every pretext were swallowed up in this awful abashment before the truth. Never walked Ireland's Isle a woman more cowed and helpless before approaching revelation than the beautiful wife of the millionaire. One fact, one great real fact she hugged to her despairing heart she was his wife—even the past could not break that bond, that chain was forged in a higher realm, the dark and the shadow and the shame might breathe upon it, tarnish it, stain it, but it was beyond its power to go further—nothing could break it. Glory to God it would be

still her own.

The early hours of the day crept away; her wrung soul, weary and suffering, laid itself on this sure pillow and slept. Meanwhile Crawford and Lamont had gone out for a walk. The young Frenchman had his eyes wide open to note what distinguishing mark a linen city would have from other great commercial places. He could see little outside the great magnificent buildings to indicate the staple Industry. The two men then looked into the shining windows of the big shops, saw there beautiful white stuff ticketed, "Pure Irish Linen."

They wondered, there was other stuff without that magic ticket, and to their uninitiated eyes it was just the same. Crawford, the big carpenter millionaire, could not explain the difference in the two fabrics, and could only shake his head to the many questions the young Frenchman fired at him. Lamont could not understand a Belfast Boy ignorant of linen; then Crawford told him he had wrought all his life on the "Island," and could tell a Belfast built ship anywhere, but linen-well-every man to his trade, and the Belfast Boy

smiled complacently.

They sauntered round the city, leaving the great open shops, and wandering into the well-known linen area with its great big blank buildings which sported on brass plates mines known in the two hemispheres with the legends atrached "Works at Lurgan, Works at Ballymena, Works at Keady," Presently, to Crawford's vision rose up the stately granite building that in early years he had thought of with envious hate. They dandered on carelessly towards it; the Belfast Boy was silent, that old queer distaste of the very name sealed his lips. It was remarkable, remarkable even to the man's self that repugnance, district, dislike, inner insurmountable feeling toward these people. Why it held him so tenaciously he could not explain, but here before the great massive business house he was in its clutches. Was he thinking of that old scene up the Antrim Road, that indignity put upon Molly when that man kissed her? But he little knew what the remainder had been.

He looked at the place almost grimly; young Lamont soon spied it, he too looked at it in strange silence. At last the

latter spoke.

"That is their business place," he said quietly.
"Yes," returned the other, "I cannot give you their private address, but the clerks inside shall have any information like that."

"Perhaps this is where I have to go," and he drew from his inner pocket a large faded envelope. It have the simple

inscription: "Victor Deloney, Belfast, Ireland."

The two men looked at it steadily. The writing was hold and handsome, but faded and worn. No wonder, for the young man had carried that packet with him faithfully wherever he went. His mother had impressed on him mover to part with it until in the addressee's hands.

At last he stood before the house, the envelope in his hand; he became visibly agitated. That last scene with his mother, her beautiful love for him, her keen anxiety over this commission, her last longing look, her tense death-drawn word "Belfast" seemed to surround him.

"Crawford," he said, huskily, "perhaps I should have come before, but even now I half wish I had not to go. Something in me dreads it, some strange force would chain me

back.'

"Nonsense, Lamont, nonsense; you have played a man's part hitherto, no doubt if your mother were alive she would

be proud of you. Go ahead and get it over."

The young man did not answer. A strange, unaccountable emotion awoke within him, a feeling that something was at hand that would transform not only the present, but the past. A sense of upheaval and flinging out of every thought and notion of himself, mingled with a strange shyness, a diffidence that had never stirred within the precincts of his young warm arduous heart put her spell upon him.

"Mr. Crawford," he said, turning round to the millionaire, "Come with me, you have been my true friend, my best, come

with me."

The millionaire hesitated; reasons, he scarcely knew and

could by no means define, made him hang fire.

"Lamont, I would rather not This business may be something too personal for a stranger's presence. You might regret afterwards having asked me."

"No, no, come; I feel almost that I could not go alone."

He was strangely perturbed. Crawford looked at him, the sense of his youngness came afresh to the big, generous, kindly Belfast Boy. Putting aside his own feelings he drew the young man's arm through his own.

"Well, well, pull yourself together," he said cheerily, and

thus they ascended the steps into the firm.

### CHAPTER XX.

MR. DELONEY, senior, usually came into the place some time of the day. One day it would be in the morning, another day after lunch, another in the afternoon. This morning he was down early to peruse certain foreign letters. Then he moved about from room to room looking at the workers, speaking kindly to a few, then passing back to his private office. When his little promenade was finished he fett that his day's work was over. The real business of the house was in capable hands, nevertheless the old gentleman was persuaded things would go askew if he did not show at "the place."

Now to interview Mr. Deloney, senior, at the Firm was almost as difficult as to see the king. The red tape-ism of a big business concern but to be gone through—the queries of the junior clerks, the dubious stare of the senior ones at such an absurd request brought into the inner office. "How could you want such a favour?" sat upon the countenance of every one. But Crawford was not nervous and not easily browbeated by the looks of anyone, and demanded a private interview with Mr. Victor Deloney. Of course, it was the younger man he wanted, but he, being deceased, it was understood by the

staff that these strangers wanted the head of the firm.

Presently they were ushered into the old gentleman's private office. It was a fine, handsome room, wainscoted in oak. On the mantel space was a beautiful portrait of the late heir of the house. It caught one's eyes entering the room with as much force as a person. Old Mr. Deloney was seated at his desk; the back of the chair he used was to the empty fire grate, and this portrait seemed to hover over his head. He was a very stately old man, a son of the early Victorian period, who went through every little item of life with courteous seriousness.

He half rose from his seat at the gentlemen's entrance, bowing gravely, and motioning them to be seated. He held their cards in his hand, and glancing from them to his visitors said with a slight smile: "Gentlemen, I do not think I've had the pleasure of meeting either of you." Ere he had finished his eye fell upon the young man; his glance steadied and deepened into a penetrating, piercing surveyal. One knew not what he saw, or what he thought, for he gave no sign, although his eyes seemed to go like clear steel through and through the young man.

"Sir," said Crawford, gravely, "I am merely accompanying my friend, Mr. Louis Lamont. He, I believe, has some letter

from his late mother to deliver to you."

"His late mother!" repeated the gentleman in surprise.

"Yes," said Louis, "Madame Marie Lamont, Paris. Some days before her death she gave me this packet," drawing the faded envelope from his inner pocket, "to deliver personally into your hands, Mr. Victor Deloney, Belfast."

"There must be a mistake, I never knew such a lady. She

could not possibly have known me."

Young Lamont paled to the lips, his fingers trembled, the

envelope, shaking in his fingers, fell to the ground.

"You, of course are the linen merchant—Deloney," said Crawford. "There is not another man in this city of that name in this business. Lamont, you are clear, your mother meant the Linen Merchant, Deloney?"

"Yes, quite clear. She often spoke of the great linen

concern. I know nothing beyond that."

"My dear young sir, I never met your mother; I never heard her name in my whole life," said the elder gentleman, with some emphasis, his piercing eyes still upon the young man.

Crawford, gazing at the elderly gentleman sitting between the portrait on the wall, and the agitated young Frenchman, caught the resemblance between the whole three. It was striking, it was unmistakable, the very voices of the two men were the same. It is strange this voice similarity in families, voices of those long gone seem as it were to come back in their children and their grandchildren. To Crawford, who was a stranger to the Deloneys, who had never spoken directly with any of them until this moment, this voice resemblance, as well as the facial one, was very marked.

A pause dropped for a second over the three men; then

young Lamont in much agitation said: "I suppose, then, you will not receive this packet?"

"Why should I? It cannot possibly be for me; there must

be some mistake, either on the lady's part or your own."

He spoke firmly, but a fear had risen in the man's soul, an awful tremor, a strange agitation. He was thinking of the dead, his dead son, Victor. Was it possible these men could be wanting him, his ideal boy whom Death had gathered into his cold hand? Who was this youth, this trepoling, excited young man, so like, yet to a parent's eye, so unlike his clever classical son? A French woman, a dead French woman. Heaven be thanked she was dead. But it could not be Victor, the old man said to the rising thought in his bosom. No, no it could not be.

"I suppose then the interview is closed," said Lamont,

rising with a bow.

"I see no reason to prolong it," returned the old Linen Prince.

"Excuse me," said Crawford, breaking in, "I know nothing whatever of this immediate mater, nor is it any personal concern of mine, but I think, sir, you should receive this paper, it can not be intended for any other."

His look was still upon that portrait, its black glittering eyes seemed to attract and hold him. Old Mr. Deloney saw his gaze, the old gentleman's fine white fingers twitched as he played with the diamond pendant at his watch chain.

Excuse me, Mr. —, Mr. Crawford, I think," glancing at the card, "but it would be against my sense of honour to receive what must be for another. I never met such a lady, I never knew nor heard of her, her letter cannot be

for me."

"I would be the last man to ask anyone to go against his honour," returned the blunt Belfast Boy, "but look at this young man, look at that portrait," pointing to it with a steady hand, "look at yourself. The letter is certainly for somebody of this family; this boy," he said, flushing deeply, almost irritably, "is a Deloney if there ever was one on God's earth, I saw it in his face years ago on the wild yeldt of South Africa."

It was a swift, bold blow; the old gentleman stiffened, other-

wise he gave no sign.

"I think, Mr. Crawford, you are going beyond yourself, I cannot hear you further."

He touched a finger bell beside him on the desk.

Louis Lamont was gazing at the portrait stock still. had he gazed from the moment Crawford pointed to it, his very soul seemed in that deep and penetrating gaze, he scarcely knew what had passed during the last seconds. Crawford touched his arm.

"Come Lamont, come, we are here too long."

The young man shook him off, addressing the aged gentleman, he cried out abruptly in his own tongue: "Who is that gentleman— In God's name who is he?"
"Why do you ask?" queried Mr. Deloney, in the same

language.

"Because," retorted the young Frenchman, strongly agitated, "I remember him—I saw him—in my very earliest childhood, in my mother's house."

A factotum in dark blue uniform with silver buttons opened

the door quietly.

"Show these gentlemen out," said Mr. Deloney, turning away with a cold bow. They passed out into an oak panelled corridor, Crawford slipped a sovereign into the factotum's hand: "Who's portrait is that in the old man's office," he asked in a swift whisper.

"Master Victor, sir, Master's son-dead," and not a muscle of his face moved as he bowed them out through the

massive plate-glass door.

"Damn him," said Crawford, between his teeth, "for an old ruffian; he knew all the time that it was this son you must be wanting."

## CHAPTER XXI.

THE two gentlemen were both deeply and seriously exited as they came into the street. Crawford felt that his old opinion of these people was true,—they were false and unsure. Even this grey-haired old man seemed to him to avoid this letter, and the truth that most probably lat, within it, like a coward and a weakling.

But the truth would out. Crawford wished in his deep irritation that he could have dashed the letter into the old man's face. "I would like to beat, to thrash him with truth's finest, fiercest finger, to lash it into him," he said to himself as he and Lamont, still agitated visibly, went slowly along.

"I told you, Crawford, I felt it in my blood it would be some way like that. I've longed, yet dreaded this interview

for many years."

"Never mind, Lamont, the old rascal knew well enough it must be this dead son you wanted. Why couldn't he speak

out like a man?"

"What shall I do?" said the young man. "My mother, you know, wished so intensely that this letter should be delivered to Victor Deloney. I've waited too long; I should

have come before he died."

"Perhaps," said Crawford cynically, "you are here soon enough. I would like to humble that old boy," he went on, still smarting under the memory of that interview. "I would like to do it. Let us go in here," he added, as they neared an hotel. "I think you would need something."

They went in together, asking for a private room. As they sat over some coffee—for Lamont refused to touch spirits, feeling that he would like to be uninfluenced, fully himself, while

discussing the probable contents of the letter.

Crawford suggested a solicitor, but Lamont hesitated. He was afraid it was something private, something personal, something she did not want made public; he also hesitated to read

it himself. Ultimately he thrust the whole thing into his friend's hands.

"Crawford, take it, you have been so good to me, so kind; deliver me from the thraldom of that letter. Read it; I think

I do not want to know what is in it."

A trembling thought was in his mind—strange, queer, almost disquieting. He was conscious of it, looking at that portrait over the proud old linen merchant's head, conscious of it while Crawford, in his blunt Belfast way, asserted that statement to Mr. Deloney's face. He did not wish to go further; he would rather things remained as they were. Crawford looked at him steadily.

"Lamont, you heard what I said to him. You remember what I said to yourself the first time I saw you out at the Goldfields. I feel that this letter will vindicate what I said then. It is a personal affair, too personal even for me, your friend. Take the papers, read them yourself; be a man, my boy, for they concern no one so closely as they do yourself."

The young man passed his hand over his eyes and bowed his head into it in silence. He was thinking deeply, so deeply

that unconsciously he muttered aloud:

"I'm afraid for her, my dearest, sweetest, my beautiful mother. I would hate them if they hurted her, if they ever dared to vex her, and that man in the picture, what was he to

her? Was-he---

He trembled violently: he did not wish nor care to go another step. The opening of these letters was as opening the heart of the dead—looking into the secrets of that dear one who had loved and fondled him with the inexpressible love of a mother. He apprehended that some of the bitter in that life he had thought of as one sweet sweet, was to be unfolded. It agitated, it hurt, it raised within him feelings toward these strange people that had never clouded his breast. He had lived without an unkind, ungenerous thought; now a strange, dark, angry gnome was beating as it were at every portal of his being for entrance.

His hand lifted up the envelope; he looked at Crawford unsteadily.

"You think this is the right thing for me to do?"

"I do, certainly. The addressee is dead, your mother is dead, you are the living between those two. Lamont, go on." A silence fell between them. Crawford moved slightly

apart. The crackling of paper was acute, the deed was done. The envelope was opened, the contents were in the young man's trembling hands. His face blanched, his lips grew ashy, but his black, flashing eyes devoured in a sort of passion all that lay under them.

There was a marriage certificate dated many years back between Victor Deloney, Deloney Hall, Belfast, Ireland, and Marie Lamont, La Seine Chateau, Paris, then a registrar's copy of birth of Louis Lamont Delonev, child of Victor

Deloney and Marie Lamont, and so forth.

Next a letter written in that dashing hand, so well known, so admired in the lad's earliest life. It was very simple, very direct, written in French, and ran:

Dear Victor .-

"The end is very near with me. I send to you our son, my beautiful boy, with this letter. I have waited waited these many years for your coming to take me to your home, to your people in Belfast. Now I must go to that other Home. You and I can never meet on earth, but my child-our childmust stay behind. I leave him to you. I have never soiled his happy life with one word reflecting on has tather. I have buried my own feelings far from his young, happy eyes. Do a man's part by him and a father's. He promises to be good. I leave him in God's hands and yours. Farewell."

"Your Faithful Wife to Death,
"MARIE DELONEY."

There was deep silence. Lamont's breath came fast and broken; he was deeply moved. The thought of what his mother lived through came home to him. Her sweet protection of himself, the shielding of him from the very suspicion of her suffering. She had made him so happy, she had seemed so happy herself; that very happiness was a reflection now to throw up the dark, dark shadow of her own life. His head dropped upon his arm; a gust of uncontrollable grief broke over him.

"My mother, my mother, my poor, dear, heart-broken

The Belfast Boy looked out of the window and pretended not to hear or notice. Something told him his surmise about Lamont was true. The young man's resemblance to the family was too marked, had too much of themselves about it to allow room for doubt; even to a stranger like himself the fact was evident.

In the first moment young Lamont lost sight of what lay unfolded before him. He thought only of his mother; he cared not that he was a Deloney; he hated them, hated that man on the portrait with the handsome, straight, well-cut features. He was glad he was dead, for in that wild moment the young man felt that he could have killed him.

The charged seconds flew between the two men. At last

Lamont rose, and approached his friend.

"Crawford, you were right: I am a Deloney. That man—was my father—my mother's heart was broken—I've no doubt she died of grief."

"It is better, my friend, that you should know the truth,"

returned Crawford kindly.

"Perhaps it is; but he must have been false to her. I can never forgive him for it; I am glad that he is dead. I will never trouble them. I would think it sin to wear their name," he said, in tense bitterness.

Crawford did not answer. He saw the young man was nettled, and suffering under the first hard knock of unfamiliar

truth.

"Crawford," he said in excitement, lifting the Belfast Boy's hand to his breast, "but for you I might have been a beggar at their door."

"No, no, Louis, a son of the family could never be its beggar. Anything you got from me you deserved it, and

wrought well for it.'

"I can never forget you. You have been to me almost—almost—nay, more than a father," and he raised his hand and kissed it.

"Shall we be going?" said Crawford after a pause, much

moved.

"Yes, but look at these; read them."

"No, no, Lamont. What need that I should? You and I were friends before we knew what they contained. We shall still be so."

"Crawford, I will always be Lamont. You will let this die

between ourselves, no one—no one—."

He hesitated. He was thinking of the millionaire's wife. Then he remembered the exceeding confidence between them, the open secret that the Belfast Boy kept nothing from his wife.

"Have no fear," returned Crawford, understanding him. "If you wish it, this shall never pass my lips." They clasped

hands warmly, and went out again unto the street.

They passed on into the centre of the city, and rounding the street into the fashionable part of the city, they came upon Lieutenant Deloney going round to the firm. They both knew him, and he remembered them. It was not possible for Deloney to forget "The Belfast Boy," the millionaite, the man who had Madalina, and he recalled vividly this young man who had almost ridden over him out in Cape Town.

"You see this man approaching," said Crawford, flushing strangely. "He is a Deloney-Lautenant Peloney- and

must be a brother of that man in the portrait."

Lamont turned his eyes full on Crawford. "Can it be? Are you really sure? That is the officer I almost trampled to

death on the Simon's Bay path."

Deloney saluted Lamont. Crawford kept his hands buried in his pockets, and his eyes staring straight before him. That remark of Lamont recalled an unpleasant incident. He had thought time and again of that scene with his wife and little son that day out in South Africa.

### CHAPTER XXII.

As the afternoon came on, Molly, feeling better and refreshed, rose and dressed herself in time for afternoon tea. When her husband and Lamont returned she was awaiting them, with the children, for it was a high day, this day of return; they

all sat down to tea en famille.

Molly was full of resolve to do her best, to be her brightest, and in some clever, yet undefined way wheedle her husband out of Belfast. She would try and make him feel here in his native place more a stranger than he had felt in foreign places. She hoped most of his acquaintances would be left the city, dead or emigrated, and in secret triumph remembered that his wealth would be a barrier between old friends and himself that the Belfast Boy himself little dreamed of. Working men in all countries stand aloof from the rich and monied man, even from one of themselves who reaches the envied niche in the temple of Mammon. This is a strange and noticeable fact in the history of men.

Molly counted on it helping her. Then she herself must play her part, and she strove royally this evening to throw off the night mare that oppressed her. She was smiling, beaming on her beloved children in devotion that pen cannot picture, and looking up to her big, good husband in fullest, truest

love.

The tea passed pleasantly, Louis Lamont with his own native politeness doing the charming to Mrs. Crawford and the children, forgetful, seemingly, of the strange and painful forenoon in the old linen merchant's private office.

They were lingering at the table chatting pleasantly, when little William drew the attention of the table by asking

seriously:

"Please, mamma, tell me my fortune"—holding up his cup—"it's tossed."

"Your fortune, darling," said Molly, in mild surprise.

"Yes, it is all in the cup."

Everyone laughed save Mr. Crawford.

"Who have you seen doing this?" he inquired gravely.

"Jane and Mary," answered the little girl. "They do it every day. They know when they are going a journey, when

a letter is coming. It is good fun, papa.'

Louis and Mrs. Crawford smiled, but papa was displeased. He disliked exceedingly anything that would leave unwholesome impressions on the infants' minds. In his secret heart he blamed this wandering, unsettled life, that threw the children so much in the society of the servants.

"Mamma," inquired William, "can't you do it as well as

Mary?"

Mamma took up the cup, looked at it roguishly, then with a slightly coquettish glance at her husband answered gravely:

"Of course. Now, first, I see a new nurse"—she read that in her husband's countenance—"and, oh dear! a real, living pony for my little son. Then a kiss from papa and mamma, and a swing from Louis."

The young gentleman was delighted, and clapped his hands in glee. His fortune was splendid, especially that part about the pony. But the fortune-telling was not over; little Ruby must have hers. Mr. Crawford murmured something about mamma having as little sense as the children, which mamma accepted as a compliment, and proceeded, to the child's jov. to discover a lovely new frock, a large doll, a new picturebook, in her little cup. Molly was balancing the cup lightly in her fingers. Louis rallied the fair Pythoness to unfold his future. She lifted her eyes quickly to the young man's face. His? He who was connected with—she shuddered at the thought.

The cup trembled, fell out of her shaking fingers unto her other hand lying on the table-edge. It was a small vessel, not cupable, one would have thought, of doing much harm, but it struck with some force the well-beloved ruby-ring on The diamonds flew about, the ring was split Melly's finger. clean open, a trickle of blood from a tiny scratch oozed over

her white hand.

Her face went like death when she saw what had happened. Crawford came round the table hurriedly.

"Are you hurt, Molly?"

She lifted her dead white face to him. "No, no, Willie;

but it's broken my beautiful red-heart."

"It was my fault; I distracted you," said Lamont, in no little annoyance. "Let me have it repaired," and he stooped and gathered the scattered stones.

Molly looked at him with ill-concealed abhorrence. The

young man was putting the stones into his pocket book.

"Louis, give me the stones. Mr. Crawford will get them re-set," she said, keeping back bravely the tears of mortifica-

tion that were burning her eyes.

The young man, somewhat hurt, reached his pocket book into her hand. Her shaking fingers fumbled for the stones; they seemed to stick in the corners or among something. Without a thought she turned the pocket book, shook it over her lap; papers and precious stones fell out together. She saw those certificates, that dreaded name, DELONEY, staring at her from her own knees. A feared quick glance of question flashed from her eyes to his. The young man flushed scarlet under the straight speech of that glance.

"Excuse me, Louis, I did not know. I did not think-

there ——.'

But had it been to save her life she could not have touched those papers, and young Lamont had to gather them up himself. She left the table and the room at once. By-and-by Crawford found her in her room, sobbing as if her heart would break. The fortitude, the strength, the determination of the early day had vanished into thin air. That dim sense of Shadow, dark and darkening, that was creeping round, above, and over her came back stronger than ever. She had loved that ring; at its beautiful glowing shrine she had done homage since her earliest girlhood. It was bitter, it was crushing, but beyond all it was through him, that—that—branch of them. Why was he with her family? Why could they not be rid of his cursed presence? It was an omen—a sign—an awful sign of the future.

Ha! those certificates. How dare he bring them under her very eyes, into her very hands? But she had always deemed it since that day in South Africa at the piano; she had known him; she recalled the unmistakable look of his face, that face that lay back in her memory as of the hell-fiend who blasted her. His son's hand, as it were, had broken her beautiful,

beloved ring. Ah! they were coming, coming to ruin her again. Her tears fell thick and hot.

Crawford tried to comfort her, begged her not to be so foolish; he soothed her, and assured her he would have the

ring mended as good as new.
"It's unlucky," she cried, "unlucky, on the very first day Oh, Willie! it's as if our Past was to be of our return. broken up."

"Nonsense, Molly, you are childish. It is only an accident. The Past is sealed between us; nothing can disturb it. should not let your mind linger on such foolish fancies."

"But it is unlucky," she cried bitterly, and he, really concerned for her health, stayed with her the whole evening, fussing about her and humouring her is if she were a spoiled

child.

The thought grew large between them of Louis Limont. Her husband knew her clever eyes had seen those ceruficates, but again that strange diffidence, that hesitancy to approach even by a side-avenue that old, barred topic, held him in spell. Molly's heart thumped in dire expectancy; she waited his every word, fearing, trembling, almost collagger at the terror of its nearness. Her hands seemed to rise up between herself and Crawford wafting and warding that invisible something off. Crawford looked at her, thinking perhaps she would make some remark herself, but to Molly it would have been easier to have faced death than speak of Louis Lamont or Louis Deloney to her beloved husband. As the dark hours of midnight came round they found her still weeping over the old well-loved broken ring, still fearing with an inexpressible fear the nearing future.

### CHAPTER XXIII.

LIEUTENANT DELONEY was delightfully surprised to see bearing down upon him in full sail these gentlemen of South Africa.

That young man who atmost rode over him somehow had impressed him, a certain familiarness in his face had haunted him, and as he approached him this summer morning Deloney would have liked to shake hands, to patch up a friendship, especially as this millionaire, this Belfast Boy, was with him. He half stopped on his step, but the strangers took no notice

and passed on.

He was disappointed. That old pleasing hope of meeting the millionaire and being asked to his place had suddenly returned, only to be as suddenly depressed. But it would come yet. He was thoroughly charmed that the Crawfords were in town. A man of his wealth could not be hidden. was bound to appear in the society circles of Belfast, and they would surely meet. His day was coming; the very dawn was in the sky. Madalina was here, here in Belfast with him, in the very same city. It was as new life, new blood, new spirit in every inch of him. He would see well to it that he got her this time. She was his; she had been always his in body and in soul. Never was a woman more a man's than was Madalina his; this millionaire, this stranger, was an interloper -a nobody-he would sweep him aside, Madalina was his. The vision of her returned as he had found her in South Africa sitting out on the verandah with two children. Then his heart thrilled with a glow of pride at his own son, older than those children, and so handsome, manly and brave. He would bring him to her, he would show her her own lovely child. Surely woman never mothered such a boy. In his infatuation he fancied Molly's feelings toward this child would be as his own, only intenser, sweeter, lovelier, being from the gentler, dearer heart of mother. Carried away by the delightful prospect, by the thought that she was near--could be only some few streets off—he forgot that dark, raining night, that desperate deed that almost sent him into eternity, that almost stained her hand with blood. He only deemed with a gladness and a glow no words can picture that at last, at last he was to have Madalina. The years seemed to roll off him; he felt himself young in spirit and in blood as he had been in the old

days.

He sprang up the steps of the firm, lighter, in better heart than he had been for many a day. His father was sitting at his writing desk in the same position as when Lamos, and Crawford left. He was lost in thought, deep, deep, thought. The conversation that had just occurred was rankling in him. Had he done the right thing? Who were these people? Who was that young man—so like, so welke his good dead on? Could it be possible? No, no, no. Victor was always good; Denny was different, very different, and a flush stored the old man's brow as he thought of his youngest son. If these strangers had asked for him he could have believed, he could have understood, he could have taken for granted a great deal; but Victor, his unimpeachable, his noble boy, that son who was too good for this world, it was not possible.

As Denny came into his father's presence bearing some trifling message from his mother, his father startled him with

the abrupt and unexpected query:

"Denny, what age would Victor be if he were alive?"
"Well, really father, I—I—. You know yourself?"
"No, I do not. Your mother always kept your ages."

Denny was about to reply that his mother could tell him;

then remembering, he said gently:

"Father, better not speak to my mother. There is no use grieving yourself or her." The older man did not reply, but after some little time he asked Denny to go personally to Bishop Dorrian, and ask his lordship to come to him in his own office. Denny looked at his father steadily. Was he ill? Was his mind, under the great affliction of his elder son's death, unhinging?"

"Father," he said gravely, "Are you ill? Shall I not

rather bring the doctor?"

"No, my boy, I am perfectly well. It is a matter, a private affair I wish to discuss with his lordship. It is worrying me and I want his advice. It always does me good. Tell him I shall take it as a personal favour if he can come now."

Then the old gentleman rose, put his hand kindly on his son's shoulder:

"Denny, when will you return to your duty, to your mother, the Church. Her arms are stretched out to welcome, to

embrace you."

He was silent. When he was younger he would have replied plainly, "The Church of Rome has no ministry for me," but his father was an old man, and wrapt up in this delusion, and he refrained from wounding him needlessly.

He took up his hat and left the room without a word, to go his father's message. Perhaps his father had some dim expectation that the presence and personality of the aged Bishop would be an influence to draw his son within the fold of the

Church again.

Lieutenant Deloney delivered in person his father's message. The aged father of the Church received him courteously and kindly. Never man carried the honour of years, the honour of position with a humbler mien. There was no parade, no swelling with dignity visible to mortal eye, yet the aged Bishop, whose sun was far down in the heavens, could give a clean thrust, a rapid blow, with a vehemence that his cold, proud, lofty successor could never approach.

Old Mr. Deloney welcomed him warmly. His lordship and he had long been closest friends, but beyond and above that there existed that bond so firm, so unique—so tinged with supernatural awe that exists between a devout Roman Catholic and his bishop. The old linen prince related briefly his late experience, the stand he had taken, and that since it a queer oppression was molesting him lest there was some truth in the

strange assertion of one of the visitors.

As the conversation advanced a quick flash of meaning passed from man to man. No word was spoken, but to the old divine the unasked question was plain. He had been the late Victor Deloney's confessor; he knew everything, even the turned-down page in that closed career, but his hand would never be the one to unfold it.

There was silence, a deep silence, then the aged son of Rome replied suavely, ignoring that far-down cry of the old man's soul for light, soothing him, yet making him feel there was

ground between them too sacred for human traffic:

"I think your attitude in the first instance was the correct

one. This young man has the legal way open to prove a claim like this."

Perhaps to his clear vision he saw if the stranger established a right to their name and family, a revision, a squashing of the old gentleman's will lately under his inspection, which made over a large sum to the Church which would have been the late Victor Deloney's had he lived. Perhaps not; but his words assuaged the unquiet in the old linen lord's bosom.

"Then I was right, my lord," he breathed in semi-eagerness.
"Yes, certainly. If they trouble you again look at their credentials. Take time, be sure of every step. This is not a matter for haste; perhaps, yes, I think you should consult your solicitor."

Then the matter closed, and old Mr. Deloney, calmed and helped, took his lordship out to spend the remainder of the day with him at Deloney Hall.

# CHAPTER XXIV.

THE first week had gone in; Mr. Crawford had been round the old haunts. Away up Shankhill and Ballygomartin and Glencairn Roads. It was a surprise, almost a regret, to find the old familiar places metamorphosed, merged into the new upgrowth of the city. Belfast had risen up to the very mountain side; there were still a few of the old spots untouched with her advance. The old graveyard up Shankhill was still the same silent, yet eloquent rest-place, and the "Round" Church, as the people called St. Matthew's, stood by the wayside calling people to repentance. The old white-washed houses, the "quality rows" that had sported their flower-plots on the front of Shankhill were turned into shops. Agnes Street corner, the big, wide opening cutting into Shankhill was changed too. The cutting was, of course, the same, but the surroundings were new, and the fields built up. Peel's bakery, famous up and down the long road, was gone. A great, big, wide 'gazsabo' of a place stood where the homely old concern had been. Joe McKibbin and his broken biscuits had flitted from the other corner. Everything was changed, save, perhaps, the warm, kindly spirit of the place. Knots of men and boys stood about as in the old days, chatting, smoking, jesting, "bulking" marbles, but to Crawford they were strangers. Those he had comraded with in his early manhood had been caught up by the great tide of Life and borne far hence, some across the Atlantic, some across that greater bourn.

He passed on up the road, pointing out to his little son corners, streets where the riots of the old days had waged hottest. There was O'Hara's public-house that had been levelled to the ground; there the "black-pad''—North Howard-street—where the kidney pavers, dug out of the adjoining streets, had banked into little hillocks. Up further, near Sugar-house Street, the Rev. Nelson's mansion house was gone, but nearer the public road, upon the late clergyman's own land, stood his Memorial Church. When they went fur-

ther up into Woodvale they found a magnificent public park in the grounds which surrounded the late Rev. McComb's house. He, too, "the marriage man," as the people called him, had received the Higher Call.

Further on, where old Betty Devlin's little inn had been, villas had arisen; McCartney's, the rope-maker's thatch-house opposite, was also gone; and Miss Stewart's—the school-mistress's lovely cottage and rose garden were swept away.

Speculation and progress had spread their all-embracing fingers over much, but the great, magnificent beauty of the surrounding hill-scene remained. The tresh, clear mountain air blew ladened with health down upon the teeming multitudes of the city. As Crawford lifted up his eyes to the glorious sight of the rolling hills and the dazzling skies, as his lungs and nostrils filled with the rare odour of Irish mountain air,

he felt there was nothing to beat it in the round globe.

His old work-shop over there on the Queen's shipbuilding yard showed perhaps the widest evidence of the advance of his native place. The "Island" was twice as large; every department had extended, and would seem to a stranger self-dependent, yet every yard was linked to the sister-yard; the great concern owed the perfect mechanism, the magnificent workmanship, the finish and utility of its sea hounds to that particular fact. Shade of Ritchie, surely you look with triumph on the great business you started on the slob-lands of the Lagan.

It was changed times with the ship-carpenter. As he was shown over the old place it was strange to reflect, to know himself richer many times even than the respected owners of the great ship-building firm. As he looked at the men, earning in the sweat of their face their daily bread, he saw a picture of what he had been himself. He was not ashamed to own it. He was proud of it, and going over to the bench at which he formerly worked, he told all present that some of his pleasantest hours had been spent there. "I think I learned to be a man at that

bench," he said firmly.

As they passed through and saw the great masses of riveters, caulkers, platers, joiners, engineers, etc., etc., hard at work, he realised that these men were the highest asset any city in the world could own.

The king of olden days could call his soldiers the bricks of

his defence-wall, and Belfast may call her "Islandmen" the

defence line of her Great Shipbuilding Monopoly.

The millionaire went away, touched with a dim regret, half sorry that he was no longer "one of the men." In his heart of hearts he was the ship-carpenter still, and he felt proud of having been once an Islandman-a brother to these sons of toil.

The dire calamity of the old ruby ring seemed to bring Molly to the last extremity. Some climax loomed over her, She did not see, but she believed; no power on earth could have shaken that one point. How it was to come was not of much concern; the great fact of its approach was sufficient. With the last wild energy of despair she strove to solace her poor quivering spirit, to whisper to it that deep, deep, self-deceit of woman-heart: "Because he loves me, because I am so beautiful."

In her deepest thoughts she knew many men would pass over everything to avert a scandal to save their own name, but her husband was not a fashion-man—he was only a Belfast Boy, with the clean, narrow views of the working class. To his eyes it would be wild, and she trembled in livid fear, and then her panting soul went back to that old soothing last hope, his

love—his great, great love.

Crawford tried his best to amuse her, to get her to come out, but she always denied him, and illness was a grand excuse. He came this evening, begging her to dress herself and come to the theatre, that it might lift her spirits and help her. idea was repugnant, every fine nerve quivered at the publicity of the place; but in her keen way she divined that she had reached that point with her husband beyond which she dare refuse no longer. She rose, trying to smile into his anxious face, and promising to be ready in time.

"Lamont," he said, "is coming with us."

"Why?"

"I asked him for the sake of the company." "I hate to have somebody always with us."

He laughed lightly, treating the remark as the silly petted one of a semi-invalid. The old theatre where they had spent their last night in Belfast so long ago had been burnt down; a newer, more modern building was upon the old site. house had that usual look pertaining so much to play-housesa free-and-easy atmosphere, chatting, laughing, passing bonbons and pretty speeches while waiting the beginning of the

play, and watching the arrival of friends and strangers.

As the Crawfords entered their box the curtain rose. Mrs. Crawford paid no attention; her drooped eyes scarcely lifted; she was striving to hide herself; but for her there could be nothing of the kind. Crawford perceived her inattention, and set himself to rouse her. He compared her to-night with what she had been when last they sat together in the Theatre Royal. He preferred her to-night. Years had ripened her, had swept away that reticence he had deemed modesty, but resented as something else. She looked simply lovely to-night, and she was his wife now. He bent over to her and whispered:

"Molly, how would you like the upper circle?"

Her drooped eyes flashed into his

"With you I would like it as much as here."

True, quite true. Had it been possible, she would have parted with every shilling in the world to be as innecent, as free from this gnawing wolf within her bosom as she had been that night when, as a poor girl, she sat envying the ladies in their laces and jewels, and trying to ignore Deloney. How the house would have stared could it have read the heart of the beautiful beloved wife of the African millionaire. She let her eyes wander over the house; they quivered and darkened, her whole being filled with a sort of fire; an excitement rose over her in a storm wave.

In proportion to it rose up all that was strong, all that was fierce in her woman-heart to meet it. Her colour neither came nor went, her fingers shook not, her heart beat on its regular even movement. But it took the very highest courage, the finest bravery to keep thus; it would have been relief to go with the storm, to let the deep excitement bear her on even to the rocks of wreckage. But she was built donr, and must fall fighting; every nerve stiffened and her proud head rose higher.

In a box opposite, at the other side of the theatre, were Sir Percy Lyle and Lady Lyle, some friends, and Deloney. Molly looked away proudly and turned herself to her husband, but there even refuge could not be. She could not hide. Other women could slip through unnoticed, but she was different. Never was she more noticeable than to-night, her eyes flashing with suppressed feeling, her magnificent hair wreathed in coil upon coil around her proud head, her rich dress of brocade shimmering under richest lace; her

perfect face coloured slightly, but above all the proud presence of radiance and beauty that is about some women seemed so distinct and vivid to-night as to frame her in a nimbus of queenliness. Yes, she was beautiful, rarely, magnificently beautiful. Every eye in the whole theatre seemed drawn to her as to a crystal globe. They were strangers, complete strangers; no one could tell even their name. No one! Ah, that is a mistake. Lieutenant Deloney knew; his innermost heart fluttered with indescribable joy. He gazed at her as if he had never seen her; a transport came upon him, bewildering, joyous, delightful. What a woman! Surely, if there was ever one worth loving it was his glorious Madalina. She was come, come, come. The slumbering giant of his passion awoke with irresistible power; he himself was led captive by it.

He saw her husband the millionaire. In a little way he hated him, hated his legal right, his massive physique, his money, his hovering over Madalina; but it was the lesser emotion, and it was swallowed up in the deep fierceness of his love. He could not remember, gazing on her face, that her hand had been lifted against him; even if he had, he felt at this moment that death from her would be a something that

he could relish.

Sir Percy Lyle and Lady Lyle soon recognized Molly. Mab gazed at her behind her fan in dumb surprise that was mingled with admiring awe. She was beautiful, almost too beautiful, and Mab had not seen such a face since last she looked at hers. That last time flashed across her, that day down town, so bitter, so terrible, and after it all, to-night she was here, brilliant, radiant with this sunburnt man treating her with such deference and respect. What had occurred? Who was he? What was he to Madalina? And that younger man in their box, who was he? He was wonderfully like the Deloneys. How peculiar that strangers sometimes bear such marked resemblance.

She looked at her husband. She dare not broach that old banned subject of his one-time cousin, but Sir Percy understood the question in her face.

"Mab," he said, hastily, "is that—can that lady be ——?"

"Yes," was the low response.

The baronet gnawed his moustache. He had tried to forget his beautiful young relative, tried to smother the anger out of his bosom, tried to forget he had ever recognised her, but somehow the memory had rankled; the soreness, the shame at her downfall were hard things from which to get away. He had hoped never to see or hear of her. To-night she came before him, not as he had imagined her, but radiant, rich, more beautiful than ever, attended by gentlemen who evidently held her dear. Then he muttered to himself with something of family pride, "she was too much of a Lyle not to rise again."

His eyes turned to Deloney. Something of the old feelings, the old wrath, stirred in his bosom. Deloncy's eyes were kindled; their dark glitter blazed like coals; he did not try to conceal his burning glances. He was not ashamed to own them; in fact, he would have felt proud to point Madalina out to the audience and confess openly: "There is my love,

my only love."

He had reached that pass that he cared for nothing only

The baronet's eyes and his encountered each other. There was menace in Sir Percy Lyle's, a danger signal, a recall, a voiceless message whispering, old scores are never settled But Lieutenant Deloney's glance quailed not; it even seemed to banter him to do his worst or do his best. He was regardless of any man. He would dare the whole earth in this matter, he would let nothing stand between him and his heart's desire.

The silent wireless messages that pass so often from mind to mind were finished, and Sir Percy Lyle, disturbed deeply by the attitude of Deloney, asked him point blank:

"Who are those people in the opposite box?"

Deloney looked him full in the face.

"The gentleman is called Crawford. He was pointed out to me in Cape Town, and was known there as The Belfast Boy. The lady is his wife."
"His wife," Sir Percy Lyle repeated.

"Yes." returned Deloney in a low tone.

"You seem to know them," remarked Sir Percy, in cold

"Nay, you do me too much honour."

"They appear to be affluent."

"Yes, he is a successful miner, a millionaire, I'm told."

Sir Percy turned away with mingled feelings. He read Deloney. Nor was it hard to read him, for he simply had let

himself go before everybody. He did not care; he would dare God, even in this great final bid for his old love. What was life without her—a drag, a weary same repetition of loneliness on loneliness. Why disguise his feelings? Why be feared to show his true colours? Time was shortening; there would be no more hypocrisy, the real, the true for him henceforth. Never a doubt of success daunted him; a shadow of such a thing never crossed his mind. All was clear, clear as Heaven. Madalina, his own was come; soon they would be together again, soon—soon—the sun would shine for him again. He thought of his child, his beautiful golden-haired boy; his heart swelled. What a picture to show Madalina; what a treat, what a bond between the past and the future! Darling little John; he must teil him, he must share the delight and joy and gladness of knowing his dear mother was come,

and his eyes fed upon Madalina.

Meanwhile there are heated spirits in Crawford's box. Louis' quick restless eye soon perceived Lieutenant Deloney and noticed his ever-returning gaze. He was fully persuaded he was the object under observation. His young fiery soul burned. He sat bristling, his pale, refined face flushing scarlet, then paling in deepest anger. Young Lamont had cooled slightly these few days, and under Crawford's strong persuasion he had handed his data to one of the foremost solicitors of the city. Personally, he did not care one groat whether the late Victor Deloney was his father or not, but for his mother's sake, to vindicate her honour he had determined to submit the entire matter to the eagle eye of the law. It was a sore point with him, this establishing of his name and birth, and much, that as a boy he could not understand, was clear. The mystery of his mother's lonely loneliness in the little chalet, her tears that fell upon his face while he slept, her silence that said more than speech. He understood these things now, and thought only with bitterness of the Deloneys. It was almost past his endurance to sit under the constantly returning glance of Lieutenant Deloney. His deep respect for the company he was with kept him in his place, but his anger was boundless, and he thought again of his mother and the odds that were against her in her fight for recognition and justice. He ground his teeth, vowing in his innermost heart, not only to make them do justice to himself, but to her memory.

The full fury of the moments beat upon Molly. Never had she been called upon to show her mettle more than to-night. A dull, grim relief tried to rise within her as she became rully conscious he had not died from her pistol; but her wild fear choked the sensation as she sat there reading his burning eyes, hearing the Past calling to her, plucking her skirts, rushing up as it were right into her eyes, crying into her face for recognition and for place. Her husband was at her side. Did he notice anything? Was it possible for him not to notice? Oh, God! if he questioned her, what could she say? What reply make if he demanded the meaning of those looks of Deloney?"

She lifted her head again, and her furious eyes flashed contempt upon Deloney. He perceived that haughty licence, and smiled slightly under his drooping moustache. She recognised him, understood his attitude, that was everything. He did not mind her little show of temper; that would evaporate once his arms were around her, once their lovely

child kissed her lips.

The curtain fell. Those in the Crawford box could not tell much what the play was; other and deeper emotions were surging in their bosoms. The Belfast B., was not blind. He was disturbed strangely; he told himself, of course, it was Lamont that they were looking at, and yet—and yet his heart throbbed keenly. That old suspicion of Deloney, of the aristocrat, that old consciousness that he himself was only a common man stirred deeply in his soul. Involuntarily he found himself watching Molly, and his great devoted heart was glad, comforted, somehow, that she noticed no one. Crawford did not recognise Sir Percy Lyle. The baronet was only a lad that day so far away now, when he had seen him. It never occurred to him that this elegant, refined-looking gentleman who seemed interested in their box was his wife's relative.

Meanwhile Sir Percy Lyle was debating with himself the advisability of going over and shaking hands with Molly. He fully understood that the world was at her feet now, that she had left everything behind, that society would only be too glad to hold her hand. Why not he, her relative, her only living relative? But that old Ulster memory, that clinging, haunting thing that holds like life itself put trammels on him, and presently he saw the party leave the theatre, Molly proud

and dignified upon her husband's arm, and radiant withal as a glorious cloud of pearl gold. Lamont followed, bearing

her opera cloak across his arm.

Lady Lyle was crying softly behind her fan. She was glad, profoundly glad, yet she could not help but wonder did the Mother in this beautiful woman never call for her child. Mab remembered the night she had carried the infant home to Deloney Hall, remembered the fight she made to have him remain there. But in the swift, flying years, had she, his mother, never longed, wished, desired to see her beautiful infant? Had she forgotten him? Was it possible for a woman so to forget her son?

Mab trembled; her very soul shook as she watched Deloney's devoted eyes following his old love. Surely, surely, he would not dare to look at her again, he would not dare to resuscitate

the past, and yet to-night he looked as if he would.

## CHAPTER XXV.

MRS. CRAWFORD was really ill after the theatre. The following days slipped in with Crawford fussing about her in his own big-hearted, devoted way. She recuperated slightly, and

presently he found something to do a house-hunting.

It was a real disappointment that Molly was not able to accompanying him. He anticipated this house-seeking as something they could enjoy together. He meant her to gratify herself to the very fullest. She had good taste, and he wished to give it full scope, but Molly would not, could not go out. He told her evening by evening of the different places, showed her photographs, and tried to get her out to see some of them before the final decision. But she only shook her head: "Any house would do in the meantime; if it did not suit they could flit."

That was just where Crawford stuck. He did not want to flit; he wanted a permanent settled home, and it was vexing that his wife was unable to help him. Pleasing her, that was the whole matter; he wished her pleased and satisfied. As yet the affair hung fire, and they were still in the

hotel.

Meanwhile young Lamont's affairs were pushing forward. The solicitors were not idle; the years were giving up their buried events, the shovel of search threw up lap by lap the heavy heaps of affairs that had crushed them deep down into the grave of time.

. It was found out for a certainty that the late Victor Deloney had been in Paris during the dates mentioned in the certifi-

cates. Many witnesses were forthcoming to prove it.

of the Deloney firm that the fine finished flimsiness peculiar to French cambrics might be an improvement to Irish mulls, so a detachment of Irish weavers were sent out to learn the secret of French cambric weaving. Master Victor, then little more than a youth, had gone out as nominal head of the party. It was at this period that he met the young grisette, and in the first fresh feeling married her. Later on he saw his

mistake—a mistake that nothing could undo. He lived in silence; he died in it rather than wound his people. He knew it would be terrible both to his mother and his father. did not trouble him what the poor, faithful little woman in France suffered. She was only the grisette. She could not meet his mother, and as long as she got what kept her he could not fancy that she needed anything more. To himself the bond was galling—a fearful, heavy chain that hung around his neck until his dying day. No man ever carried a heavier fetter than a woman he is ashamed of. The true inwardness of such a position gnaws like a canker. When he found his brother that morning at the church door he believed he was about to make the same blunder as he had; as an act of charity he saved him. It was enough that one of the family made a mesalliance, and he wished to God somebody had stopped him that day he made a fool of himself. As for the little grisette's child, well-he was the grisette's child; no doubt he would knock out for himself. She would see that he was put to something that would support him; French people do that kind of thing. He never had one qualm, one idea that as a father he should acknowledge and receive his son. Nothing of the kind; he was engrossed with his literary pursuits and his religion. His religion on this point was a very consoling one. It taught him that when the girl was not a member of the True Church, when the ceremony was not performed by a priest of that Church, he was not really married. The old canonical law, not enforced much in these lands, held him guiltless in deserting such a woman. By-and-bye the knowledge came that she was dead; but it came too late to bless Victor Deloney. The man on the White Horse was already saddled and booted, and very soon he galloped up to Deloney Hall. He spoke of this affair to no man but his ghostly confessor, and he left this world believing that whatever wrong was in it he would expunge it in Purgatory. Oh, the sadness of it; the utter warped sense of duty and right that had possession of this child of Holy Catholic Church; the havoc it made of the voung French Huguenot grisette; the evil it wrought in his brother's life, and in the life of Madalina Bennett. Had she, in her wildest dreams, imagined that the hand of Rome was the unseen power that really blasted her, she would have raised the Shankhill, raised the Island men, and true hearts of Sandy

Row, rather than let papal teaching wound her child and ruin the man she loved. But it was perhaps better that she knew it not.

Young Lamont had gone on to Dublin to look round him, to lift his mind; if it might be, from these affairs that had taken such a grip of him. Crawford missed him much. If his wife had been about it would not have been so perceptible, but without her he was strangely alone. The very thing that Molly had counted on was going to happen; the Belfast Boy was beginning to feel himself, as so many men de when returning home after absent years, a stranger in his native city. But he told himself it would pass off when they were settled in their own house, and Molly was herself again.

Meanwhile Deloney was in a state of unrest -a sort of freezy had come upon him. Day and night were the same, full of Madalina, full of the gorgeous vision of golden hair and flashing eyes and gleaming robes of satin. He could not get from it; her magnificent beauty, her regal womanhood never came to him as it did that night in the theatre. He pictured her at his side, pictured her glorious eves raised in their old love-me-way to his, pictured the sweet long 1 -c-filled life they would live. How the years had gone by without her was a mystery; they had been to him desolation, desolation, desolation; they had revealed to him Life's stupendous lie. When he looked at her he knew what he had missed—the real secret of life, the love of his heart, the joy of his eyes, the intense sweet something that makes for man—music, poetry, content, home. He waited, hoping to chance upon her, meet her in some public place or perhaps in society, even it might be in Sir Percy's, to stand before her, to see his image in her shining eyes, to hear her lips speak. He would ask her to come to him—he only had to ask her. This big, strong, strange man, he was not like his Madalina; he was not the sort of person for her husband: she had no husband but himself He was in God's eyes her husband; he had been so in spirit from the moment his eves first lighted on her. No one dare combat it, no one dare deny it. In a sort of inner triumph, he remembered the child, the living image of his mother, the proof magnificent of this assertion. She herself knew it. If she had married this man it was not a true marriage; she must have been beside herself, labouring under somewhat of her old illness. She had no love to give this

man, nor any man, no heart, no soul; all had been bestowed

upon himself.

He trembled with joy at the very recollection, of the pleasure that had touched his soul once before. His heart almost burst its bonds anticipating its return, return that would never experience going away. He stood in the dead hour of the night over the cot of his little son whispering in his sleeping ear many dear things his lips might not speak in daylight. He called him his darling, his son, his joy, his everything. Then those soft sentences, those warm words, those joy-breathing echoes of a man's deep heart, broke from him in the

darkness of the night over the silent, sleeping child.

He lingered about the hotel, haunting the buffet, lingering in the billiard-room, hanging about the vestibule, but still he never came directly into the presence or company of the millionaire, or chanced upon Madalina. She was in the hotel, he knew, but as yet he had not come upon her. Once the wild thought crossed him of going up to their rooms and asking for her. It came to him again and again, but still he hung about, hoping Fortune would be his harbinger again. But the opportunity he expected did not turn up, so the same thought came back. As his mind played with it, another idea, more simple perhaps, but much more effective, crossed his brain. He drew his breath in surprised delight at the strange potency, the power, the charm, the simplicity of the suggestion.

He would do this; it would be a master stroke; of its success

there could be no question.

Now that his course was shaped he only waited, familiarizing himself with the project, thinking out details, amusing himself,

playing as it were in secret pleasure with his plans.

He was not quite in the dark about Madalina. He heard through the waiters, who got it from the other servants, that the wife of the millionaire was ill: in fact, had not been well since her arrival at the hotel. He was told also that the millionaire was house-hunting. In an hotel it is nearly impossible to think without it becoming common property.

As the days slipped by and no shadow of her presence came to him he resolved to put his little plan into action. His soul was weary waiting; his passion whipped him. He could give his very life just to have her in his arms, just to feel her on his breast. He thought of Sir Percy Lyle, her cousin, who

had threatened him long ago, who cherished bitterness toward him still, but he too was a man; surely he could grip what the lonely life meant, what the aching gnaw was. The old mistake had been terrible, but he had paid dearly for it, and the new sweet Future would atone for all. Everybody must forget and forgive. He would like to shake hands with Sir Percy, like to feel that the bitterness between them was done away. Surely he understood that everything was due to the misguidance of his youth, that the best in him had always been for Madalina. He wished he dare go to his old boon companion and ask his help, his support in this venture for the girl of his heart, but the baronet's eyes that night in the theatre vetoed that, in fact menaced him. Nevertheless he must dare him; he was a soldier; he would fight cousin, husband, world, everybody, for his darling Darling.

A sort of delirium was upon him. He flung every scruple to the winds—husband, children, public opinion, scandal, his own family, and the great and higher Being whose laws he might be trying to ride over rough shod; these things had no weight, no place even in his thoughts. Every nerve, every thought of his mind was her. He was blind to every obstacle that would thwart him; only that blazing, luring light of her

could his poor eyes behold.

So one forenoon in the glorious fulness of springtime, his hope beating high, his eyes sparkling, his whole being attuned to the very highest pitch, he set out. He remembered that she had been fond of his uniform, and he put it on, feeling every inch a soldier. By his side was his little handsome son John, the child's long golden curls shining like spun gold in the summer air, and in the rear the big dog Shannagh. He was thinking as he went in a silly way how proud she would be of them—the beautiful child and himself—his tall figure seemed to stretch higher; he was going to her; he could bear the strain no longer. In broad daylight was he going before all the city. He cared for nobody, he cared not that the great cloud of witnesses seen and unseen were ranged around; he was supremely indifferent to the worlds visible and invisible.

Mr. Crawford had been out the entire morning on his house quest. As Delonev approached the Imperial Hotel he drove up in a little hired dog-cart and went on into their own suite.

He spoke to his wife about the place he had just seen.

It pleased himself very much, and he tried to get Molly persuaded to drive out with him and examine it; but Molly smiled into his eyes and told him to take it, that she was sure to like it. He left her room to send a message to the houseagent to that effect; having done so, he rang for his children and began to caper with them. There were tosses, swings, rides-on-his-foot, rides-on-his-back until children and father were satisfied. Then they sat down quietly, and he asked them to repeat their little hymn. Little Ruby almost cried; she could not say one word after the first line, although mamma had taught her the other night. Little William had his off perfectly, and papa deputed him to teach the little girl. He thought he would write a line to Lamont and ask him how he was, and tell him that they had decided upon a house.

He began the letter; the subdued sounds of the children were in no way a disturbance to him. He wrote on for a few seconds; then a tiny knock at the door, such a queer, wee, uneven knock, it arrested him more than an ordinary one. The children paused in their monotonous hum, and Mr. Crawford

looked up and called cheerily, "Come in."

There was a little fuss at the handle, then a second tiny knock. Crawford, somewhat surprised, laid down his pen and opened the door himself. A handsome little lad, dressed in dark blue velvet, followed by a powerful Newfoundland, walked coolly in.

Lieutenant Deloney had tipped one of the waiters to leave John at the millionaire's door. "Friends," he breathed. "A surprise visit, you know," and the man, slipping the half-sovereign into his hip pocket, brought the child upstairs.

Crawford looked down at the unexpected visitor in much surprise. Little John stepped into the centre of the room, not at all daunted by meeting strangers. He looked round the room as if searching for someone, then the children took his eye, and he examined them carefully and critically. Little Ruby hid her face behind William's back, terrified to tears at the big dog, but William was above crying and held his back manfully.

The Belfast Boy had still his hand upon the door knob. He had suddenly grown hot, then cold, stone cold. There was something too familiar in the white, classical face, in the fine,

flossy, yellow curls of this strange child visitor.

He knew him. He did not attempt to disguise it from himself. The dim shadows, the unshapen thoughts, the strange flitting moments, things that had scarcely been, that had come and gone like dreams these many years, had taken shape and form, and limb and life. The power of speech seemed to leave him, the power to move; he stood transfixed. Then, presently he mastered himself a little, and to his own ears his voice sounded odd and untuned.

"What can I do for you, little boy?"

John, thus rallied, turned from the children. His sunny face, its witching charm, its sweet fresh candour, its open smiling frankness, its shimmering cloud of gold-floss flashed into the man's eyes the face of a little girl playing round the old miser's cabin, the face that lay back in the years, the sweetest thing of memory.

"Please," said the child, "It's mamma I want, mamma

Madalina!"

The blow told home. The Belfast Boy was a Sampson in his way, but the strong, great heart within him winced. He said nothing—emotion like his had yet to first a tongue—but he stood as it were withered, pierced by a swift poison-dipped arrow.

"What is your name?" he asked in that queer tone.

"John Deloney. But Uncle Denny told me this morning I had a second name, John Bennett Deloney. It's rather big, don't you think?" and John looked with his glowing smile straight into the face of the tall, trembling millionaire, who stood with his eyes glued upon the child. He needed not that name to convince, to drive home the fatal fact. He had no doubt, there could be no doubt of what the child was saying, nature was too true; every feature and every expression of hers were reproduced.

Pain, torture, agony, hopeless and fierce wrung him as few in this life are wrung. The awfulness, the upheaval, the tearing out of his whole life were dreadful. Darkness seemed to smite him within and without, darkness both thick and deep. He turned into his own little room that opened off the sitting-room they were using, and closed the door. Who would be so rude as enter unasked into that dark and disillusioned

chamber?

### CHAPTER XXVI.

JOHN was in no way put out at what had taken place; in fact, he fancied himself something of a champion. He had obeyed Uncle Denny to the very letter, only just mamma was not present, and he could not kiss her, but he had delivered his message clearly and unmistakably. However, he had forgotten the little detail to return immediately to Uncle Denny. But how could John do that when there were two charming children present to arouse his social instincts?

Instead of returning to Uncle Denny he went over to the children, quite willing to make friends. Little Ruby drew farther back upon the couch terrified at the approach of the dog who was at his master's heels, and William viewed the

stranger coldly.

"Is this your sister?" began John. "She need not be afraid of Shannagh, he is a good dog."

Shannagh looked wise and wagged his tail. "What is your name?" continued John.

"William Crawford."

"Shannagh," proceeded John, politely, "this is William Crawford; shake hands."

The brute lifted his paw obediently and put it forward, but

young Crawford was a trifle remiss to take it.

"Do," said John, a little huffed. "It's a very soft paw." Thus urged, William did, and the lads got into a friendly chat. Presently Shannagh was put under the table and forbidden to come out, which indignity was quite uncalled for in that dog's philosophy. However, he obeyed mutely and suffered his big carcase to be hauled and pushed until his posture was quite satisfactory to John. This was in consideration of Ruby who could not be prevailed upon to lift her face from behind William's back until the dog would be away. When Shannagh was hidden the children became quite social; John, of course, was chief talker, and the hero of the occasion. He was owner of many valuables, he had two white rabbits

with pink eyes, and a real gun that shot an eye out of grandma's peacock, and his own pony. This was delightful, quite wonderful, and Ruby gazed in amaze at this great proprietor. John eyed her particularly, then he seized upon her pretty eyes and informed them that they were far prettier than Vevee's; Vevee was his sweetheart. If she hadn't been he would have had Ruby.

This displeased William, and he told John to go away.

John defended himself valiantly, "Vevee was real sweet; when he grew a man he would marry her-everybody married,

gentlemen especially."

William was not quite clear, but he was sure of one thing, he himself was a gentleman, his mamma had taught him that particularly. He was quite annoyed at this remark about his little sister. He turned away coldly, and assuming his duty as teacher, desired Ruby to go on with her hymn, quite ignoring the little stranger.

John put his hands into his pockets and listened, not the least affronted at this slight; in fact, he considered his

argument so strong that William could not answer it.

John caught the little hymn the children were repeating, and was in the act of astonishing them win his repetition, when the door opened softly and Crawford came in, his hat in his hand. John's innate cleverness divined immediately that the interview was about to close, that the children were to be removed.

"Are you William's papa?" he asked.

"I wish you were my papa, I do indeed."

Deep silence, then in deep accents, this charged query.

"Who is your papa?"

"I have no papa," returned the child wistfully.
"Who have you?" asked the Belfast Boy, as he looked gravely into the child's face.

"I have Uncle Denny, and grandpa, but I would like a papa

of my own."

"John's eyes slowly filled, the heavy tears hung upon his golden eyelashes; the something he had hitherto missed and never been right able to define was clear to his infantile brain. Yes, it was his papa he wanted.

"Are you going away?" he inquired frankly.

"Well, good-bye," holding out his hand; then, in a softer tone, "may be you'd kiss me, you're such a nice big papa," and his beautiful face, softened with pathos, was lifted to the

big steady man gazing silently into it.

The strong man quivered visibly. Kiss him? Deloney's child—hers?—Ah, no, no, he could not, flesh and blood could not do it, and yet, and yet—the child stood, half-expecting, almost praying him. Rising high above everything in his own darkened bosom, he stooped his tall strong figure, and suffered his lips to touch John's white marble-like brow.

"Little boy," he breathed in broken accents, "wait here,

and you shall find your mamma."

Oh the shame, the humiliation, the pathos, the pain of those words. When this child found his mother, he lost his wife, lost—all—his past—his present, his future—all were wrapped in shame. It was an awful moment. The tension round his heart was as a steel band, squeezing and squeezing as if it meant to reduce it to pulp. He was going away, he knew not where, nor cared; only one thing amid this unexpected upheaval was clear, to go. Her he must not see, he felt it would be better so, he dare not trust himself to see her, he could not be accountable for himself for the wrath burned within him deep and fierce. She had trampled his honour, deceived him deliberately; came to him with her pretended love, while in reality she was that man's cast-off, the stained shabby remnant of exhausted lust. Oh God, it had lain in his bosom, it had coiled itself about his breast, it had suckled at the pure, honest fount of his love, his life, his very thoughts It, that desperate unnameable was the mother of his children. Surely he had never deserved it, surely he was worthy of better destiny. God, whom he had worshipped, might have averted this. He might have laid it on one who could have stood it better.'

The turmoil in his soul raged. Presently he rang the nurse into the apartment, bade her take the children downstairs to the front door; he himself would be with her immediately. He sent them just as they stood. He had no memory of clothes, belongings or anything—the supreme endeavour was consuming him to get away, to avoid her, to leave her to her conscience and her child, lest, Oh, Heaven, he should lift his hand against her, and with one blow revenge this terrible

disgrace she had put upon him.

He turned again into his little room; it opened into the semi-sitting-room, semi-boudoir where she was. He took out his cheque-book, and with a hasty hand signed a few unfilled cheques. It was the only message; the only signal, the only anything from him by which she might gather that he was gone

As he was leaving the room he crossed to the door where she was, shot the lock, then with heavy steps went downstairs. One of the lackeys in the hall called a cab, and he put his children and the maid in, and went in himself, and was driven

off.

He had got away safely. Deloney, down in the coffee-room, which opened off the hall, and looked out unto the street, saw him leave. He deemed that his first move had not done badly, the deep, deep query in his soul was, had he quitted the hotel without her, had he left the field open and clear? Was she alone—alone, awaiting him? He half-believed it. He was anxious and impatient at John's delay, he waited, counting

the very seconds. Yet still the child did not return.

John, when he found himself actually alone, wept softly. He seldom cried, but to-day he did, feeling trangely lonely, and queer in the empty room. He called Shannagh to him, and sitting down on the carpet put his arms round the great brute's neck and laid his head upon him, his fine, flossy curls mingling with the dog's shaggy coat. A weariness, a sense of unwellness foreign to the child came upon him in the silent big room, he dropped asleep, the tear-drops wet upon his long golden eyelashes, and his arms around his faithful comrade.

### CHAPTER XXVII.

MEANTIME, Molly is in the inner-room. Since they had decided on this house she had been planning their future. It was so long since they had had a house that the idea was not altogether unpleasing. She thought of their first house, the little shanty away out at the gold diggings, the happy time it had been; she wondered would it be possible to live alone, to keep everybody off here in Belfast as they had done away out on the wild veldt of South Africa. She was afraid of everybody, afraid of Sir Percy Lyle, for she saw that he had recognised her; afraid above all of Deloney with his cruel eyes searching her face and searching the person of her husband. Often since this homecoming the thought had crossed her of her cousin. Her husband had spoken of him now and again, but she had shifted from the subject and given the Belfast Boy the impression that she had no great leaning

to Sir Percy Lyle.

Long ago, in their first marriage days, she had told him briefly that they had had a fall out, and that she had come away without reconciliation, and he, occupied with his work, steeped to the fullest in his affection had little time or inclination to talk much about it. Molly feared to meet her cousin, feared that he might meet her husband. The cloud she shrank at seemed to come about her, to surround her, to hem her closer and closer: Yet, strangely enough, this forenoon sat not so heavily on her, this new house might be a safer retreat than the hotel, and it would be pleasant to get away from the heart of the city. She determined to push the matter on, hasten whatever repairs might be necessary, painters, housefurnishers, etc. She had made practically no inquiries about the place. At lunch she resolved to discuss the affair It occurred to her that after lunch they might have a closed carriage and drive to the house. She looked out through the window. Yes, it was a glorious day, they would go and take the children, it would pass the afternoon

agreeably. She chose out a lovely dress of white embroidered Irish mull, and with quick eager fingers put it on, as the idea caught her and she went with it. Buried in her thoughts she had not missed the cessation of the children's voices, the silence that had come upon the adjoining room. When she was almost dressed she called softly, "Willie."

There was no answer. She went on dressing deftly, then a little louder in semi-petulance: "Willie!"

No reply. Silence, her quick ear noticed it. A flash of alarm, fear, dismay struck her. She crossed to the door, it was locked. Locked! the echo of a fear deep in her soul leaped into reality, but she did not wait to ask the reason, her step never slackened, a sort of grim dark spirit that brooked no delay had put his hand upon her. She dare not stay to question. With a steady hand she opened the door into the outer corridor and went into their sitting-room. Her heart had almost ceased to beat, her brain to think, but her eyes, clear, shining as very stars never saw more clearly. He, that—child, lay sleeping on the great dog's body.

She did not faint, she did not scream, nothing but a stillness

as of death passed through and through her from joint to joint. The dead Past had only buried its dead, its Living had come right up into her very room in the hotel. She passed the child quickly and went on into her husband's room. Not there! That same strange dull silence pervaded the place, her eye spied the envelope lying on the dressing table, it was characteristic of the man who put it there: "FOR YOU."

No name? No, he could not call her by his name; never, never again. It had been a dread and terrible ordeal to address that envelope, but he had got through it, and he knew she would make no mistake. She opened it hastily, nothing but cheques, not a word, not a syllable. She flushed deeply, she understood perfectly, the eloquence of silence! Who has ever penned or voiced? This cold, stilled, found-out woman heard the clear, unmistakable, unspoken accents—the charge, the condemnation, the desertion were ringing in her

Money she might have, but not his love, his children, his name, his society, or his home. To one expecting these money was a paltry gift, it insulted her, it struck her as it were right in the teeth. She crushed those cheques wickedly

and dashed them on the floor.

"How dare he run away? Why not wait and see me? Why not hear how I was deceived and betrayed? But I am his wife," she muttered in a sort of unquenchable triumph, "the years that I have been faithful and true count as naught." Then the momentary fury passed, and her pale lips moaned: "Willie, Willie, Willie,"

She dropped across the bed in an utter abandonment of desolation. All the hallowed of life was gone, the sacred union with her children, the unspeakable attachment to her husband, his love blasted, his respect for her shattered for ever. The horrible consuming sting of the situation was that truth, simple open truth, had brought it about. All was true, she could not deny it; she knew not what he had heard, how he had heard, but be it what it might it was all truetrue—true, awfully, painfully, righteously true. That tearless, cryless, indescribable consume was the more intense, the more unassuageable because it was so. She could not cry, pain, deep, blank, fearful wrung her; here she was, that dreary appalling blasted spectacle seen time and again upon the stage of life—A WIFE FORSAKEN, oh, the bitter of

Presently, in a trance of agony she went back into the sitting-room. She approached the sleeping child. The dog gave a low, deep growl; the lad stirred in his sleep, opened his eyes, saw her, awoke instantly, and ran to her eagerly.

"You're mamma," he cried, gazing up to her, "I'm so

glad, the big gentleman said you would come."

She coloured deeply, dark, purply red, then pale as a corpse, without a word as she gazed down into the lad's unlifted face. Such a face, so beautiful, so sweet, so like her own, but tender with childish delighted love and innocence. Her firstborn. the little one of her early years, the child of that wild dream. This boy with the glorious face was he; he had haunted her for years, his image had risen as a shadow over the brightest moments, and now he was come into her room, into her life, into her happiness, into her marriage, in between her husband and herself. She could not take him to her bosom as she did her other children, although more beautiful than they; she could not even speak to him, whatever words she would have said choked in her throat.

"Mamma," said John, gazing up in awe-struck admiration at the tall beautiful woman, "Mamma, shall you be good to me, like Vevee's mamma? She calls Vevee, pet, darling," nobody calls me those nice names. Grandpa calls me game, Uncle Denny says I'm a trump, and Rob, our footman, says I'm a man. That is the very best, isn't it? Everybody else calls me naughty John."

"Nurse slaps my hand in the nursery, and when I tell grandmamma she says I should not be naughty. Vevee's nurse daren't slap her, her mamma would be so angry. Mamma

please, you won't let nurse beat me?"

His fine, glossy eyes filled as they upgazed to her, but still she stood silent. A catch was at her heart, a terrible suffocation that was new and strange, that had never in the long years touched her. "She beat me yesterday," resumed John, feeling when he was permitted to go on that he had got someone to listen respectfully and sympathetically, "and held my nose, and made me take nasty castor oil. When I vomited it she made me take it again. Oh, it is nasty "Ha-ve—have—you—been—sick?"

"Oh, no, just yesterday, and a wee while ago, I was sick

a little, but you won't hold my nose?" he cried in alarm.

"N—o, No."

"Medicine has such a nasty taste," said the child, his face clouding perceptibly, as he stood gazing up so seriously at her.

Ill-treated! this beautiful child ill-treated! such a notion had never crossed her. She had been persuaded within herself that nothing but kindness and attention would be his. "Had it been this way all down the years?" her panting heart cried.

Love, attention, care, the most complete had been showered on her others; had there been none for this child? Had he

dared to permit such an outrage?

Her hand crept down among the bov's bright golden curls. A wild yearning, smothered and smothered for years until it had betimes almost burst her heart, rising up in a storm heavy with anger. They were standing thus, her fingers mingling in the little one's vellow hair, the child looking up at her in a sort of curious devotion when the door handle turned and Deloney walked in.

Shannagh walked over to meet him shaking his tail gladly, but for the first time little John did not run to meet him. stood his ground, a bright smile illumining his countenance.

Molly drew herself up to her full height, taking her hand from the child's curls. She was vexed he had caught her so: not for worlds would she have let him guess one spark of tenderness or softness for the child was in her bosom. raged in her like a torrent, hate so impotent, so useless. She saw him, easy, handsome, gallant-looking, but in her eyes the personation of every vice, the merciless wretch who had trifled with her youth, who had trampled every law of honour and decency under his feet, who came now to sunder her from her husband, to wreck the happiness of her home, to bring desolation upon her, and who apart from these had permitted the helpless child to be beaten and abused. Surely never breathed a more callous or more debased man, and amid the consciousness of it was the awful, frightful, overpowering sense of his strength. It seemed as if he always won, as if fate played into his hand.

Deloney came slowly towards her. He too was full of emotion, as violent in its way as her own, but so different in kind. They looked at each other a few seconds, then John, bursting with delight at his newly-found treasure cried out: "Uncle Denny, such a lovely mamma. Nurse won't be allowed to beat me, and I shan't have to take nasty castor oil," and the child, still smarting under the memory of that

incident looked gratefully into the lady's face.
"Madalina."

She did not move nor change colour, or lift her eyes. white, diamond-flashing hand was ignored, but he was not to be ignored; he deliberately lifted her white, cold hand. These words of little John's were pleasant in his ears, a portend of a happy day. He was quivering to his very finger-tips, never laboured he under such excessive agitation. He was aglow, his eyes sweeping over her beautiful face glowed like coals They were together, here, alone with their child, it was almost more than he had hoped, no husband to repulse him, nothing to divide or sunder them. He had been almost sure he would have to make a fight, but nothing of the kind; dear Madalina, sweet Madalina, it was as it was of old; in her silent devoted way she accepted his deep affection. Love conquered for him, love made straight his path, he had only to draw her to his bosom, to take her with him to another life -free, happy delicious, untrammelled, unhampered by cursed conventionalities of men and manners.

He began to speak in his old soft enthralling way. The affection, silent so many years, ran on excessively like a stream long obstructed, suddenly sweeping off all barriers, and rushing unbound to the main. He was blinded by his own passion and deemed her silence responsive.

"We shall be so happy," he murmured, "What is the world to us? Together we shall fear nothing."

He never doubted her old affection. Love like hers never died, or cooled, or changed, truly, but yet it is susceptible of death. Her love died not of itself, but it died when he murdered it, smothered and choked it in her proud, young bosom. At a moment like this he did not remember that he ever injured her, the yearning in his soul swent those unpleasant facts away, he only knew he was with her, he had her as it were again.

Molly stepped backed proudly, her colour flamed. A fearful nervousness had put a spell upon her when first he came into the room, a horrible consciousness of aloneness, of having to face her foe unaided, but she would have been no true Ulster

type if unable to rise to the occasion.

"You forget yourself, sir. At least refrain from humiliating

yourself."

How cool, how clear were the words, but in the tone there was something no lover could mistake. He looked at her half-startled as if dimly conscious that the veil he had wrapped about himself was rudely torn.

"It is not humiliating to love you." "I beg of you to leave my apartment." "No. Where you are I shall be." "Then I must have you turned out."

She began to pace the room, passing the little lad plaving on the carpet with the dog. She was conscious of an inability to cope with this elegant handsome scoundrel. His words were sinister, the covert threat was not missed upon her. Doubtless he would take rooms at the hotel and haunt her. If he ran after her from place to place it would have but one meaning in the eves of the world, in the eves of her husband. Such a wretch was capable of this conduct. Nothing was too mean for him.

Lieutenant Deloney noticed her haughty grace, her womanly charm, her agitation, all were splendid to his eyes. thunderstorm of disgrace, a lightning of desolation, a rain of despair were beating over her, but yet she bore up grandly great, in her very extremity. She was glorious, the old fierce proud spirit of her mother's people was aroused within her. Deloney might hound her, but he would be greater than a soldier if he conquered her.

Her white face grew fearless; determination breeds a power

of it's own. She went right up to him.

"Do you understand, I love my husband, he is more to me than ever you were. I shall love him, and only him until the end."

Impassioned, calm, her attitude, her voice begot a hush in

his warm tumultuous soul.

"If he were not your husband. If he—he—tried to—a—a." Her heart sank like lead, but she would rather have died as allow Deloney deem that the suggestion in his words hit hard. Doubtless if it were possible, Crawford would free himself. Her look flinched not, and she replied in perfect truth. "You would be the same as now—nothing."

There was a slight pause.

"Madalina, are you quite sure?" he asked quietly.

"Perfectly sure," she replied, firmly.

A silence, deep, stern, came upon the man. His throbbing excitement seemed thrown back upon itself. He dare not ask himself what it meant, but something in his bosom strained to snapping point.

The seconds flew in charged silence; he seemed to have

nothing more to say.

"Uncle Denny," came a soft, weary-like call, "Uncle

Denny. I am sick."

Looking round, they saw John lying coiled upon the carpet, his head pillowed on the great Newfoundland. The dog looked appealingly upon the lady and gentleman as if comprehending his little master's words.

### CHAPTER XXVIII.

IT was an unlooked for interruption to both. In the tense repressed excitement of their conversation they had almost forgotten the little boy. His soft wail came in upon their deeply-beating bosoms like faint cries across storm-swept billows. Deloney went at once to the child and lifted him in his arms tenderly.

"Sick, John; where are you sick?"

John laid his hand on his breast affectingly. Molly looked at him critically, and a queer fear chilled the heated disturbance in her soul. As she looked, John's white beautiful little face suddenly became a bright shiny pink, then the flash faded leaving it paler than before. Molly shivered strangely, she had never seen anything like this, and to her clear mother-eye it was significant. The child's pulse was quick and unevenand his skin hot like an oven. Again quick, startlingly quick came the pink rash, this time leaving traces, bright little spots upon the smooth ivory-like brow, and completely over the

beautifully moulded little body.

The complaints of the child were still fresh in her ears. He, who should have had compassion had permitted the child to be abused. A brute would not have done it, but it was a far day since she discovered he was more cruel than the brute beasts. It had been secret balm during the silence of the years to believe John was well minded. She had in her remotest soul counted upon Deloney fulfilling not only his own part but hers by the child; to hear from the lad's own lips such statements wrecked her secret consolations. Her eyes kindled with reproach, but Deloney bending over the child, alarmed exceedingly at this unexpected occurrence, did not notice. He had not heard of the child's indisposition yesterday, in fact it had not gone beyond the nursery, and the conduct of the nurse was unknown to him. John had never been ill; a hearty. healthy child ever since he came to Deloney Hall, he was quite unprepared for this sudden illness.

"Why have you been unkind to the child?" asked Molly at

last; "perhaps you did not imagine I should hear of it, but I have, even to the brutality of the servants."

Deloney looked at her strangely, was her mind wandering,

what delusion was upon her?

"I do not understand you," he said quietly. "John has lived in Deloney Hall, my people have been kind to him, and he has been very dear to me."

"It is untrue," she returned bluntly. "He has told me the

servants beat him, everyone treats him as 'naughty John.' "
The lad stirred in Deloney's arms, and opened his hot eyes upon the tall, white-robed woman, the expression "naughty John" was so exceedingly familiar that he recognised it even in his pain.

"Naughty John; that's me," he said. "Mamma, is it

naughty to be sick?"
"N-o, no little boy."

Deloney carried the child across the room to the couch and laid John carefully down on it. He turned to leave the room to order a cab to take the child home at once, but the little eyes followed him closely.

"Uncle Denny, Uncle Denny, do not go away, please."

"No, but won't you let me take you home."

"No, I will stop here with mamma, she is so pretty."

And John turned his fine black eyes on the cold waxen features of the pale woman who stood there so helpless, so angry, so undone.

"What is the matter?" she asked Deloney, who stood near

her.

"I cannot say, perhaps he has eaten something."

She shook her head unbelievingly; whatever was wrong it was something worse than a disordered stomach.

"Ask if a doctor may be brought in."

He bowed, he was only too glad to go, and went swiftly from the room. Molly stooped over the child and smoothed the light feathery curls from his brow; the little temples were throbbing, the eyes heavy with sickness, the beautiful little face flashed with pimples. The child was conscious of the touch, something in it was different from the hand of any other. A wild mother yearn was struggling fiercely in her bosom. She went with it, putting her lips down she kissed him passionately.

John opened his eyes.

"Mamma, am I your own pet?"

"Yes, yes, my darling," she muttered thickly, glancing

round, afraid Deloney had returned and heard her.

"That's three I have; no four—Uncle Denny, Grandpa, Rob and you. Shannagh" he called, seeing the great dog sitting with its forepaws out and his eyes set upon him.

The dog came forward and pushed his big nose up to the

child's cheek and licked it with his broad pink tongue.

"Nice Shannagh, I'm so sick; if I die they'll put me in a big hole where you can't see me. No more fun Shannagh, no splashes in the pond, no rides on Nellie, no rolls in the meadow, good Shannagh."

The child was overcome at the idea, it was the first approach of fear in his fresh happy little life, so full of joy and free-

dom and frolic, he began to cry.

He cried at parting with his dog, he did not cry at parting with his mother; ah no, mamma was a new-found toy with which he was barely familiar, but Shannagh, dear Shannagh, was his boon companion, who had eaten his cakes, romped and played and entered into all his sport.

A numb jealousy stirred in Molly's breast. Jealous! Jealous of a dog! The dog was more to him than she, his mother. She strove to put the animal from the couch, but Shannagh would not obey her, and kept his big brown eyes

steadfastly on John's face.

She turned away slightly to calm her throbbing heart that hungered for her child. A vague horror was creeping over her, this sickness might be unto death; these words of the child might be prophetic, these moments, last moments of her beautiful nameless boy, the child who had been beaten and abused, and whom she had forsaken ruthlessly might have only come to go. Ah! cast your bread upon the waters, and it shall return after many days; bread was returning, the bitterest woman ever ate.

She turned to him again and lifted him gently on to her knees; it was better to have him there, to feel for one moment that he had her breath about him, her hands and her heart beating kindly close to him. At least it eased her, whether John was more comfortable or not. Her eyes, her heart, her whole being were magnetised as it were upon him; the little beautiful burned an impression on her that never was obliterated. The rich glowing tints of the May sun fell

around the room, on her golden hair, on the little one's yellow curls, and upon the mute dog, so mutely conscious all was not well with his little master, and so full of brutish grief. It was a strange trio in the hotel apartment, the beautiful lady, the beautiful child, the magnificent dog, all suffering keenly.

Molly tried to speak, tried to make herself beloved to the boy upon her knees, but language stuck in her throat. The words choked each other, and there came nothing but empty sound from those straining lips. She had the feeling of a guilty woman, she must say something, she made a desperate

effort amid the bitter reproaching of her spirit.

"John-my son-forgive me."

"You mamma!" opening his eyes. "Have you been naughty?"

"Yes," she confessed in a low tone. "Yes, I left you."
"Left me? Was that naughty? Yes, I'll forgive you,

to-morrow," and he closed his eyes wearily.

To-morrow! What an answer, not even the little cheer of pardon. To-morrow! Would he be her son or would he be

God's to-morrow?

She tried to master herself, not to suffer her heart to throb so wildly. She saw him momentarily getting worse. Oh, the cruelty of watching helplessly a little soul suffer and fight against some subtle relentless pain. It was Molly's first experience of real sickness, the first great clutch upon her innermost heart.

The door opened, and Deloney came softly into the room. The change in the boy's face was vivid; there was a look, a whiteness never there before, his pulse was tremendous, and Denny's heart got like a stone in his bosom.

"Uncle Denny," said little John. "Why am I so sick? Am

I going to die?"

"No, no, John. What put such a thought into your head? You'll be all right when the doctor comes."

"But Uncle Victor died and the doctor came. He was sick

like me."

There was a pause, then the child asked in a low awed voice: "Uncle Denny, if I die shall I go to Heaven? Vevee told me heaven was for *little* children; I'm not little, I'm big. Shall I get in?"

The child's large questioning eyes were on the man; he flushed in painful silence. That day, far back in the years with

its hot wild words, its bitter scorpion-truth cutting into him, its awful Scripture passage that declared that there was no heaven for John, or such as he, swept blindingly about him. He suffered deeply standing there, his head bent, unable to assure his little one that if there was a heaven he would get it. He was not religious, but at such a moment he would have given much, nay everything he had in life to have the truth to tell his child. Oh God, that he could only recall the past, drive back Time to that day at the gate of St. Anne's that he could enter the old church and do away for ever with the possibility of this situation. Was there no place of repentance? Had he sold his prerogative as a man?—sold it for less than a savoury mess of potage?

"Uncle Denny, if Shannagh could come, and you and

mamma," he added softly, "wouldn't that be jolly?"

Uncle Denny passed his hand across his brow, and glanced uneasily from the child's rapidly changing countenance to the door. These bright rushing spots were alarming, he was strangely nervous and afraid; against something desperate in his heart he tried to hope. Surely this illness could be nothing serious, the lad was so well and hearty this very morning.

Molly held the child tenderly, her breath drawn in, her bosom quivering. It was a trying moment for her; thoughts, suggestions, wishes scarcely formed, that had chasen her for years, were ranged about her. Often, very often, she had wished her first-born dead. The awful certainty was being borne in upon her that that wish was to be gratified, but she was to see with her own eyes its actual fulfilment—see the little one who had never injured her, who would have loved her in his manly innocent child-way writhe, fight vainlessly, then grow cold, stiff and voiceless. Heaven! it was a terrible sight for her to see.

"Uncle Denny," said John again, "Uncle Denny. Whisper with me." The gentleman bent his head near to him, and the

little voice asked, "Uncle Denny, why have I no papa?"

There was a deep pause, the very dog seemed to breathe more silently. Her eyes and his met, met over their questioning son, bitter memories became real for one long, dark moment. There was the church, empty, hushed, magnificent, the toned sunshine flooding the altar and the aisle. How silent, how reverent, how awed it was! The moments passed, the whole edifice was charged with anxiety, the clock struck,

a woman's mind gave way, a man turned madly unto folly-

and an unborn child was branded.

A scarlet flush dyed her marble brow, the public degradation of that day had never lost its sting. His heart beat painfully, full of a regret no words could utter; that day had been for him the driving from the gates of Eden. He had never been able to return. Something as powerful as an angel with a sword of fire had kept him out. Oh, God, that he could have his chance again.

John not getting a reply wandered on:

"The big gentleman was so nice. He kissed me, I asked him to. He's William's papa and the little girl's. Such a nice little girl. She was learning a hymn, Uncle Denny; I

have learned it too."

He smiled proudly, certain of his cleverness Poor little perishing thing; his little smart sayings were soon to be over. He would never astound Rob or please Uncle Denny or Grandpa or Shannagh again. That arch smile smote Deloney, it was similar, so similar to hers. John had ever been to him a miniature of Madalina, but never had the expression been so true. Sickness had brought out in a marked way that touch of melancholy which had been one of her charms in early girlhood.

"Uncle Denny, that big gentleman is so nice I would like

him for my papa."

Again a pause, deep, tremulous, charged; then Deloney in a low but hasty voice said: "John, I am your papa."

He flushed deeply, and shifted his eyes from the child's

upturned gaze.

"You? Uncle Denny. You—my very own? And I have a mamma,too. Oh, it's real nice. It's queer—lonely like not to have"—and a sunny smile of satisfaction played on his features.

Deloney bowed his head, his arms folded across his breast. He stood motionless as a true soldier, his features pale as death; he had not deemed it in him to suffer as he did at this moment. It was creeping in upon him, that his child, his illegitimate beloved, was stricken, that he was slipping from him into the great unknown; no power was his to stay the mystic silent flight. Something above and beyond himself had led him to this confession. He was glad it was over, glad the lad understood, but the humiliation, the awful

degradation in the words crept about him with their own

sinister darkness of dishonour.

The minutes were like hours; would the doctor never come? Was there no aid, no hand to save the child in this swift and sudden illness? No, there was not. Disease, blighting, cruel, masterful as Sin had claimed him, and would never depart until that little carved ivory shrine of an immortal spirit was empty—a lamp emptied of the undying oil.

Disease? yea, she was the hand-maiden that wrought out that old stricture, that unrepealed law that declares that these children will not continue, and she was doing her work quickly

and surely.

"Papa listen."

Denny looked up at the new name. Little John began slowly:

"I do believe, I now believe, That Jesus died for me, That on the cross He shed His blood. From sin to set me free."

"Isn't it nice, Uncle Denny? Where's grandpa? Grandpa says I die game. Am I dying, Uncle Denny?"

Uncle Denny was speechless, this verse of that old hymn of hers. How he remembered it, and that night up the crowded Shankhill with the summer sky, with her stars like gold overhead. Some voice had spoken to him that night, some call from the unseen world had caught his ear at the threshold of his manhood. Oh, God, that he had responded; that he had let it draw him on to righteousness and heaven. He had never heard the voice again, never until now. Here it was, whispering, crying, urging, that he too would believe that Iesus died for him, the soldier, the sinner, the man who failed.

Molly held her head down in agony. She too recalled vividly that Sunday night up Shankhill, on the outskirts of the crowd, remembered the hymn and the story of the preacher—the drunkard who hounded his little son to death. That man's crime seemed light beside her own; she had not beaten him, but she had deserted him, and left him open to the mercy of servants and strangers. Remorse took out his fine cutting tawse and whipped her mercilessly. If the Past could only be recalled, never, never would she put from her, her beautiful son. As the ritornello of the words echoed and

re-echoed through her, she seemed to see in the shadow of the sunlight that Presence she had been conscious of before, not now the prophet of Galilee with His new teaching and new commandment, but the Man of Calvary with His new sacrifice. The heart in her cowered, every sense seemed numb save the deep consciousness of the great Figure with arms outstretched, cross fashion, appearing there behind the sun. He was beseeching, He was pleading, He was pardoning. It gradually dawned upon her that since that old verse of the Bible that barred John was written, He had died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. "Us" was a very personal word, it meant themselves, whether legitimate or illegitimate; John could ask heaven, John could enter.

He died from sin to set me free.

The sin, the sin not his own, but of his parents could not bar him now. He had died—further He had risen. He was here. A sort of triumph, a riancy of hope burst on the woman's mind and soul.

"John, see there He is, Jesus who died for You, Jesus, Oh

Christ."

And she put the hand she had raised to point toward Him as a cover over her face. Deloney startled at her voice, at its suggestion, at its deep agitation, looked where she indicated; he saw or fancied he saw the outline of the Cross shadowed clearly behind the beaming sun. It was an awful moment for him, a moment of dispelling darkness, a quick sure certainty of things that had been dark before.

In an abandon of adoration and emotion he flung himself upon his knees, and in the old way of his boyhood making the

sign of the Cross.

Thus they gathered where we all gather in our deepest

agonies, around the Cross.

The deep Silence, the realisation of that Supreme Presence were overpowering, yet through its agitation a holy calm, a holy hope gathered. He never came to condemn the

world, but to call it to Himself.

The moments seemed to pause, then presently time seemed to resume its march. A light knock was at the door, the handle turned quickly, and the doctor walked in with quiet authority. One glance was sufficient for him, he spoke some words to Deloney that Molly did not catch; the immediate necessity of a trained nurse and the removal of the child to

the hospital at once. He scribbled a prescription hastily, and Lieutenant Deloney took it himself to Grattan's Medical Hall a few yards away. The medicine arrived in a few minutes, the doctor administered it himself. He took the little one from Molly's knees, and looking sharply at her bade her retire. But she declined decidedly, and his orders were in vain.

By and by John seemed a little soothed, and the doctor left saying he would be back when the arrangement for the child's removal was complete. The lady and gentleman when alone stood by the couch without uttering one word, only the faint breathing of the child broke the silence. As they watched a dark red flash coloured the pink brow and face and neck vehemently, then suddenly it paled, leaving the face ghastly, yet the child breathed on.

yet the child breathed on.

Neither of them knew that the sudden disappearance of that

flash was the certain signal of fatality.

The silence was acute. Presently a weird, curious moan filled the room, it was startling and strange; it came from Shannagh, the great dog outside the door. Deloney opened the door and bade the dog cease, but the brute continued its wordless threnody. It seemed to charge the moment with greater grief.

It was not possible to linger a moment from the little sufferer, the marble features were twitching, the golden head moved uneasily, the hands were flung out restlessly, the little breath coming quickly and unevenly, and still the dog keened deeply.

Crimson shadows of the afternoon sun were moving through the apartment, the glorious beauty of May was flushing the world without, but in this quiet hotel room the strange calm

beauty of death was hovering.

Little John grew easier; he opened his dark, glossy eyes, sparkling now so brilliantly, and swept the sun-coloured room. "Mamma, I see Him now, Jesus, who died for me. He says I'm not naughty. Oh, Uncle Denny." Softer, then a sigh, sweet as a minor triumphant chord, the last little breath hugged the name beloved. His eyes were fastened on vacancy, as if seeing some glorious scene veiled to their eyes. A look of surprised gladness lighted up the motionless features, no more pain, no more breathing, only that silent expressionful smile. The little pranks, the pert questions, the merry romps were over. John had gone away into eternity. Christ had done Himself what He urged upon us—suffered the little child to come unto Him.

# CHAPTER XXIX,

"I am undone,
For I have loved where loving was denied.
To-day is dark and Yesterday has died."

Eric Mackay.

THEY were with their dead. The child that he had loved so fervently, the child that she had feared was coldest clay; the link of life between these two was snapped for ever. Deloney stood motionless, almost as the dead. That little fainting voice, that desperate realisation of a flying spirit had unnerved him, as the roar and horrors of the battle had never; the last struggle, the wrenching from his heart of his little son left him weaker than a woman. Madalina and this little lad had been his own personal possessions, the two around which the deep secret tendrils of his manhood had entwined. One was gone, gone hopelessly, and in this moment of separation he half-believed the child the dearest one. The charm, the love, the sparkle of the lad had flushed life with a beam of beauty; now the child and his little wiles were gone, suddenly

like gas-jets unexpectedly turned out.

He looked at Molly as if for sympathy in the deep laceration of his soul, but she was standing stunned, overcome with the horror and swiftness of the affair. She had never stood at a death scene; she scarcely grasped that the child was really dead, she half expected the little voice to say "mamma"; the rich afternoon sun fell upon her, her eyes, stretched and anxious, were fastened on the dead face that was such an exact copy of her own. The awe of death was in the room, was upon each of them as they stood there in such silence. the deep awful keening of the dog rose about them. Deloney drew his breath hard. He did not credit that old foolery about dogs whining at death, but certainly the cries of Shannagh were past enduring. He went softly to the door and ordered the brute home, but the great animal looked up at him in tears as if resenting the unkindness of the order, pleading to be near his little master.

Deloney went again into the room. He touched Molly

gently: "Come away, Madalina, come away."

The voice had an inflexion, a tremor, a jar vibrated through its very calmness. Her eyes, still straining upon that face, suddenly comprehended, saw distinctly the *dead*. She clasped her white cold hands convulsively, beating back as it were the wild wish surging up, to have her child, to hold him in the face of all difficulties, to save him from being beaten and abused. Deloney touched her; perhaps he thought there was some sympathy between them in this dark experience. But this silent, suffering woman had no room in her heart for him. She thought only of her child, her lost dead boy. Deloney put his arm gently round her shoulder and moved

her slightly away. "Madalina, come."

He drew her to him with gentle reverent hands. She was resistless in his arms. He held her head, that golden head that had been absent so long, to its own old place upon his breast. He looked into her eyes—a long subdued look, heavy with suffering that blended in the glossy depths of his eyes with yearning love. Was he searching that fair countenance for what he had seen in it before? It was not there, yet the face seemed to him as fair as when it spun its coil fine but invincible about his young manhood. The dull hope upon her was breaking, the semi-stuper was going off, she felt as if awakening from a nightmare deep and awful. A flush tinged her white face at finding her position. Their eyes met, fastened on each other: the softness, the love; the unspoken pleading in his recalled her to herself. Deloney bent his head nearer, his breath was upon her cheek.

"No! not in such a moment?"

She drew away.

His arms loosened. "Is there nothing for Denny, your own Denny, who has been faithful through everything?"

There was a slight pause.

"Let me be very true with you; there is nothing."

His arms fell slowly, and without a word he turned over to the window. The blow had told, the truth gradually dawned on him. It was as if everything on earth was suddenly wrenched, the hope he had lived on was dead for ever, the dream of his life was dispelled, he was unloved, it was gallingly true, she was another man's wife, really lovingly, faithfully. For him there was no Madalina, no child of Madalina, nothing but the cold conventionalities of life, the glamour, the perfume, the flower, the music were gone for ever. He understood at last.

The tears that he had held back over his dead child came now, salt and bitter; the tears of a man; those awful symbols of feeling too deep for words, that sweat of the heart's

distress, how truly awful it is.

She stood apart; delicacy forbade her to look, but she knew, somehow the old first days flashed back when he had been more to her than earth or heaven, and the blind infatuation, the thrill, the thral, the high hope, the colour of those days, how glorious they were—then the wreck, her Adonis fell, the shrine of her soul empty, her life dark. Shame like a bull's eye gleamed upon her; how had she lived through those terrible days. But, great heaven, if he had only been a man, true to his promise, they could have been so happy—so happy.

He turned back to where she stood with clasped hands, her white dress vivid in the slanting sun; his eyes lingered on her as on a masterpiece. It was strange the power that her beauty always exercised upon him. She was his love, his love, this woman who refused, but he was glad she was so magnificent, and if it had been possible he would have died at her feet.

He never wished to go from her presence.

"Madalina, I have no one, now little John is gone."

"You were not unkind to him?" she inquired, lifting up her dark sad eyes.

"No, never. Do not think so for one moment."

Her mother instinct had reared at the little lad's words; it soothed her now to be thus reassured.

Deloney paused slightly, then resumed quietly:

"Madalina, I beg your forgiveness, I would rather die as grieve you. I really believed you cared for me in spite of your position. I fancied it was with you as with myself, for I have never gone beyond the old time, my own frenzy blinded myself, when my eyes fell upon you passion took me captive. It is my mistake, my delusion, Madalina, can I undo it? Can I atone? Give me something to do. It shall be mercy."

"There is only one thing—bring me my husband."
Ah! her husband; the man who had his place. Her thought was following him, her heart was reaching out to him even amid their conversation. But her will was now his law.

"Give me your pardon," he said in a low tone, "before I

go to do so, before we part for ever."

There was a pause, her folded hands were cold as death, her wedding ring caught the flash of the sun, and blazed in her eyes. A ring without a husband, perhaps never again a husband, nor child, nor home, and this man standing pleading had brought it about.

Her cold clear eyes met his burning suffering ones; she saw as it were his innermost heart. The old love called hard to her, but she was an injured, embittered woman; and she was a wife forsaken through this man, the darkness of her past, the darkness of her present were his doing. "When you give him back to me, then Deloney I will forgive everything."

He bowed, she had made the conditions, he would fulfil them or die in the effort. It perhaps would be his last great errand for her. In the dull dark future, if for him there would be any future, it would be pleasant to remember that in one thing at least he had pleased her. He led her gently out of the chamber of death into one of the adjoining rooms—he would not leave her alone with the little dead lad. She sank exhausted into a chair.

"Good-bye," he murmured softly, "good-bye, perhaps for

ever."

She did not reply, she only gave one more searching lock into his sad eyes. Somehow the disturbing question had arisen about her, if in that long gone-by day she had misjudged him, if in spite of that disappointment in the church, IF he had really cared?

"For ever," she murmured slowly, "good-bye for ever."

And yet the end was not.

## CHAPTER XXX.

DELONEY went quickly down the staircase. He met the doctor on the stairway; a few brief words explained the situation. He had many things to attend to, the removal of the child home, the ordeal of acquainting his people with what had occurred. He dreaded it, he shrank from it; the pain and numb upon his own heart increased as the duty came nearer.

He drove on an outside car through the crowded city streets. The big warehouses and factories and commercial houses were disgorging their assistants and workers after the day's toil; the streets were animated, almost gay, as the people, relieved to be free jostled, joked and laughed on their way home. The sounds jarred on Deloney, he who had loved a laugh, joined as he passed on in every mirth, felt as if those sounds were irreverent and coarse. His grief was complete, his break-up apparent; in that one short day he had as it were re-lived at highest pressure his whole life. The end seemed as it were upon him, the windows of his soul were darkened, the sweet, delicious, personal expectancy of ré-union with the woman of his heart was dead for ever. He had no love, she was another man's wife, by choice, by affection, by law, and by those interchanged vows neither Divine nor legal that make a woman and man one. He understood the situation fully, he was outside, beyond the pale of their happiness, beyond the pale of life's only thing. He had pinned every happiness on Her, and now he understood that all was lost. If only the little lad had been spared, if only—if only—. The tears swimming in his eyes fell thick and fast. He was nearing home, how would he go in, how speak to his father, to his mother, to old Rob.

The car swung through the gates of Deloney Hall, then forward under the magnificent elms of the avenue, past the open doors of the hot-houses, from whence the rich luxurious

blossoms breathed faint odours into the cool avenue.

The old familiar servant opened the door as usual. He started back aghast at the white, haggard, aged face of "Masthor Denny." He looked terrible, a broken-up, wornout man.

Deloney's heart almost failed him. He missed the bright face, the eager welcome, the laughing prattle of John as he came into the hall, but without scarcely pausing he went into the library to his father. The old gentleman was sitting at the writing-table; a bronze crucifix was before him, rising up amidst a host of correspondence.

He was surveying letter after letter; every one he read he laid it before the crucifix, and said a short prayer. There were many letters, many certificates, many notes from his solicitors. He was going through them conscientiously; these letters were everyone on the same subject,

Louis Lamont.

The old man was troubled, deeply troubled. To him it was a sad affair, the memory, the character of his unimpeachable dead boy were, as it were, in the balance. Of course many a man had made a secret marriage, but Victor had been so different from most people, had passed in society as a bachelor, had been so good and true a Catholic that it was hard to believe this of him; yet the facts of the case were very plain, the evidence was clear, and the old gentleman was deeply perturbed as the affair grew more and more distinct under this careful scrutiny.

It was thus Deloney found him, as with white drawn features he came and stood before him. His father, startled at

his appearance, rose at once from his chair.

"Denny, my boy, what is the matter with you?"
"Father, prepare yourself—a dreadful affair—a—"

"What is it? Tell me quickly," and his fine hale countenance blenched. His mind was so engrossed with his subject that the idea rushed into his head that this young man who said he was Victor's son had done something rash. Not for one moment did the handsome, rollicking child cross his apprehension. Perhaps at the moment he could not disassociate his mind from the stranger who had come to disturb their family peace.

"Father," said Denny, mastering himself as well as he

could, "Father, little John is dead."

The old gentleman reeled, the blood surged in his head;

his fine old figure trembled from head to foot. Dead! the lad who had kissed him this morning, who had come breaking in upon his quietude like a gay song, whom he loved almost more than his own children. Dead—dead— he could hardly believe it.

Denny laid his arm round the old man, and thus for a few seconds they stood in sacred suffering. He knew his father loved the little wild olive that had been grafted into their family tree; the tears began to drip from the old worn eyes, and somehow the son could not stand it; he slipped out softly into the grounds, wandering vaguely in his grief. He could not go to his mother, the proud, stately lady who seldom thawed save in his presence, her dearest, youngest and only son; he knew the child's death would touch her deeply, and

he shrank from her tears.

As he wandered about half distrait he saw a strange cortege and in its rear their dog Shannagh, turn in at the gates and up the drive, and on to the hall. They had brought the little body home, the clay, the cold, cold clay. How would he enter the house again, how bear the vision of him cold, silent, and dead. He passed out through the gates into the high road, his head bent, his feet tottering, his shoulders up like an old man. He went on, on, on, back toward the city, anywhere, any place, to avoid the consternation, the anguish and dismay that would break out in his home when the little dead child would pass within its portals.

His steps wandered on slowly. Evening was lengthening out into the semi-dark of a May night. He tramped on, scarcely conscious where he went, and with that wish, to avoid home

big within him until the first wild woe was over

By and by the glare of the city approached, the distant rumbling of a great hive of humanity crept out into the balmy night. The trams were spluttering backwards and forwards as the done-out horses staggered on; cars and cabs dashed hither and thither, but Deloney with his bowed head and broken heart heeded not, and walked doggedly on.

He came at last to the city-heart. His steps turned deliberately to a newspaper office; he pencilled the notice for

the obituary column.

Deloney-Suddenly, at the Imperial Hotel, John Deloney, son of Lieutenant Deloney, Deloney Hall.

He went out into the street again; he knew not where to go,

it was as if he had no place to go. The desolation was upon him so complete that he felt cut off from everything, adrift

upon Life's sea.

As he went on, suddenly in the throng about him his eyes noticed one, a Saul among his fellows, mingling in the crowd. His steps quickened, his pulse warmed, his dark eye flashed with a light as vivid as fire. Her commission rang back to him.

"Bring me my husband-My Husband."

Here he was, the essential to her happiness, the man of her choice. His own flattering fate was throwing him across his path thus easily, was bringing them face to face, to hasten the fulfilment of her desire. It was strange it was to be so soon; he was glad, glad to please her, to atone if he could, to sufter if he might for the Past. His only wish now was to restore, to

give her what she asked—her husband.

Crawford was dandering about, unheeding the scene around. A sort of suffocation was upon him. He sought air, and his head was lifted up high above the pedestrians, his eyes fixed on the great masses of shifting clouds, rolling and rerolling in the deep Irish blue; but he was blind to the lovely mingling diaphonous films, a black, ugly, foul sight was before his mental gaze, a deceit so brazen that it had for years passed as truth; all was clear now, his married life stood out blacker than hell. She was this kind, the woman with the face of an angel, whom he had idolised from his boyhood, whom he had looked up to and reverenced in all things, she was the one who had played him false. The humiliation, the degradation of the position he occupied were to his spirit like slime.

Defoney stood in his path; the scarlet burned in the Belfast Bov's tanned skin. He tried to pass, but the soldier did not permit it; instead he began to speak in low intense whispers, to pour out fervidly words he had never breathed to mortal ear. Never at any time had Deloney given himself a good character, to-night he kept to the old lines. Crawford towered a very giant, his brow frowning, his eye kindling as Deloney ran on in soft swift strong accents. What flowing passionate relation was this that convulsed this large powerful man? The hot blood leapt in his veins, every virtuous element of his being rose up in arms, but he laid giant stress upon himself; his hands closed tightly, his lips more tightly, and without one word he assayed again to pass on his way. It was almost

too much for him to withhold grappling this soft-spoken viper and flinging him unto the pavement, a broken, crushed remnant. What was he saying now? Had any man dared to say it, let alone this miserable whining scoundrel? Would that for three minutes they were upon the wilds of South Africa.

Take her back—return to that woman? The scorn in his face, the look in his eye were ugly. He was insulted, grossly insulted, he demanded the satisfaction of a man, and in swift blunt words affirmed that it was not on account of their uncleanness, but simply because he had dared to insult him with such a suggestion as to take her back.

"Creatures of your class," he said with infinite scorn, "can do such things, but with me, the ship-carpenter, the

miner, the plain man it is different."

They made arrangements hastily, and Crawford explained that he was practically a stranger in the city, and would not care to ask any of his few friends with whom he had scarcely shaken hands. Deloney said they could fight alone. Presently they parted with cold punctured words. Crawford kept on his way, his head higher than ever, his steps prouder, but he was boiling with indignation. The idea of Deloney addressing him was outrageous; he was amazed at himself that he had not struck him. He was glad that he had not, and consoled himself with the honourable revenge that was at hand.

The hot burning confessions of those thin aristocratic lips were like poison. Truly she had been the victim of grossest treachery, but she had gone into it with open eyes, for he himself had warned her. She knew the man, besides the affair was not his business. What touched him was that after it she dared to marry him, to deceive him, to pretend throughout the subsequent years; the rankness, the horror of it to his

manly open character were indescribable.

As he passed on down amid the sauntering crowd, he suddenly stopped. A quick recollection passed through his mind, his pistol-case was in his bedroom in the Imperial Hotel. He glanced swiftly about, the shops, the entire city, were closed. What was he to do? He would not for every penny he was worth fail to keep this midnight appointment. What would be the use of going without his weapon. Doubtless this caricature of a man he was dealing with would dub him a coward

and a ninny. There was no getting out of it, he must go to his room in the Imperial Hotel for his pistol; true he could send for it, but in view of what he wanted it for it seemed the simpler and more private way to go himself. Still he shrank from approaching the very building that covered her. Then he told himself that she was less to him than the dirt he trod on; he was a man, he could go in peace and courage anywhere. So he went.

The hotel seemed in a commotion more or less unusual; he noticed it slightly as he passed up the staircase to their suite. The overpowering stench of disinfectants took his nose, but he passed quickly on. The sitting room was locked. A man, a stranger in official dress, walked up and down the corndor before the door. Crawford did not know, nor did not stop to inquire who or what the man was; he was merely a sanitary officer whom the doctor had put in charge of this particular room.

The Belfast Boy without even a question went on to the other door and passed into the room. Molly was sitting in an easy chair before a fire, for the cold that was upon her was as the finger of death. She had scarcely stirred since Deloney left; her maid had come to assist her, but she had waived her off with her white cold hand. Crawford entered the room. She knew his footstep, and turned her white agonised face to him; his eyes fell not. He moved swiftly about the room; ha, yes, there it was upon the mantel-board, he must perforce go nearer to her and he went.

Her eyes lifted to him full of appeal, eager, penetrating. It recalled the look given him out of the horrors of a rushing gully. That day so far away was the beginning of his conscious love toward this woman, and strange this same wild gaze of a stripped soul should mark the decline and sweep

off of his long delusion.

She struggled to speak, but a nightmare laid its fine but feartul meshes upon her, suffusion of emotion absorbed her utterance, she made a monster effort but it was vain, her lips trembled, her fongue clave, in silence. She was in a terrible plight, these hours that she had passed in this silent lonely room had been heart-searching; the death of the child was still upon her, and from her lonely chair she had heard feet moving and re-moving in the next room, gruff voices softening

somewhat as they gave orders; then they moved out, silenter,

swifter, away down the corridor and stairway.

She knew the little dead body was taken on, far from her for ever. The child she had pined within her deepest soul for, that had appalled, yet held her in bondage, had crossed her path as it were for an hour, then vanished. Oh, God, the regret of her bosom, the fierce wild regret because that in those dark days she had put him from her. If only she had held to that child, brought him with her to South Africa, his presence would have made things clear to Crawford. The position she sat in this night, forsaken, separate from her children, heart-broken and alone, would never have been possible. What was he doing? What was he taking? Ah! the pistol, the murderous Martini Henri of South Africa. Stern inflexibility was upon his every feature. He put the pistol case into his breast-pocket, then with steady step walked out of the room.

She saw this in her agonised numbness, that frightful night-mare seemed to intensify. She listened with her ears extended, her eyes standing in her head, to his footsteps gradually dying off in the corridor. He had come, he had gone. What was he going to do with the pistol? Her breath came in gasps, she rose with a bound out of the chair. She would see what he meant, she would stand between him and any folly he might contemplate. With a swift movement she caught up a fine white Indian shawl lying on the chairback, threw it over her head and ran down the staircase, by the

surprised servants in the hall, and out into the street.

Was it instinct or insight drew her steps aright. Soon she discerned his tall massive figure threading through the city throng. She followed him swiftly, right on into the May

mists of the young night.

#### CHAPTER XXXI.

LIEUTENANT DELONEY took a car and ordered his jarvey to drive his best. The Irish Jehu made his horse go, the jaunting car jaunted as only an Irish side-car can; soon it

approached once more Deloney Hall.

Deloney left the car outside the gates upon the roadway and passed on into the grounds himself. He scarcely knew why he had come back. As he neared the house he saw that it was alight, that lamps passed from room to room, and somehow it seemed that every wandering light came back and converged into the drawing-room. Ah, yes! There upon a little trestle bed lay the beautiful cold form of darling John, the crucifix in his small white hand, the blessed candles glowing about him and falling in silent radiance upon the beautiful smiling face. Those who saw that face kept it for ever in their memories; it seemed in its purity, in its radiance some reflect of an angel.

The magnificent room had many delightful and rare objects of art, but never before had it been graced with such a specimen of the Master Artist's craft; the wonderful marble there in the off-side of the room was totally eclipsed, there was nothing in the sculpture but the image of Man, but here in the dead child was the image of God, no earthly hand could

make that

Deloney paused as he neared the house, then he decided not to go in; it would unnerve him more, he could not look upon that child again and live. The parting from him was as

the rending of soul and body.

He looked at the grand old mansion of his forefathers—it was possible he might never look upon it again; the glorious shrubberies, the lawns, the terraces, the flowers, the great wide sweeping demesne rolling farther than eye could see. This was his home, where he had been born and nurtured, where the frolic and flush of his boyhood had passed. He loved it, he loved it well, it was to be his, every acre of the

fair lands stretching on every side. It was a goodly heritage, and he was expected to heir it and hand down to postenty the honoured name of his forefathers, and yet—the darkness

was upon him, he could see no To-morrow.

He moved along slowly with bent head and drooped eyes. The door of the conservatory was unlocked; he went in quietly and moved down between the vivid rows of blossoms. In the semi-light of the Heavens and reflections from the house the flowers looked lovely with a strange eerie loveliness; the rich soft odour came about him like supernatural perfume. He pulled a few choice scarlet blossoms and a little spray of maidenhair fern, then he passed out again into the night. He went along to the back of the house, down to the stables, he had believed they would have been locked, but they were open. One of the horses was ill, and the groom and coachman and some of the other men-servants from the house were foregathered, doing what they could for the brute, and discussing with awed voices the sudden death of the little child. John had made a place of his own in the heart of every man about the place. They were telling little stories, little tricks he had played them, and the hearty laughs he had taken; the uncertain light of the stable lamp hid the tears that fell from many of their eyes.

Into their midst came "the livetenant." He spoke to every one of them, and going over to the suffering brute put his hand kindly on him. Then he gave the coachman a sovereign to divide amongst them; the day was he would have told them to drink his health and have a good night, but, of course, on such an occasion anything of that kind was not expected. They all noticed his haggard done-out appearance, and every man felt for him and knew that he was wounded deeply. He lingered a second, his eye fastened on the stable wall. Then, when a quick action he lifted an old holster from its place. They all saw him; a silence dropped upon them, a cold shiver seemed to creep over every one. Then

the coachman ventured to speak.

"Sir, Masthor Denny, don't touch it. It would do no good, remember the Masthor."

Deloney gave a short laugh.

"Don't be alarmed my lads, it wouldn't shoot a pigeon. Now boys, good-night," and yielding to some impulse he shook hands with them one by one.

They were somehow strangely moved and watched him pass down the path and out of sight. They shook their neads seriously, none of them liked that taking down of the old pistol-case. Perhaps it was true what he said, it wouldn't shoot a pigeon; no doubt it was an old thing, they never saw it used, but still they did not like him to take it. One of the stable helpers slipped out after him and watched him go slowly down the front avenue, and as he neared the bend which shut off the view of the house, he turned and looked back. Then he went out through the gates and drove away on an outside car.

The car went now in the opposite direction. He was going to Lady Winnie, the blossoms he had picked were for her. He thought of her in such a moment, he had a curious desire to see her, to speak with her, to say good-bye. These last few hours had opened his eyes, their bitter experience showed up her long hopeless hope in its cruel absorbing impossibility.

She loved him as he loved Madalina—in vain.

She was sitting down to her lonely supper when he arrived. As his eyes fell on the daintily-laid yet simple table, it flashed over him how lonely, intensely lonely it must have been to live thus for so many years. She asked him to sup with her, and he sat down at the table, and not until then did he

remember that he had not eaten since morning.

He lingered with her, so quiet, so gentle, almost tender. Never since their first acquaintance was he so near loving her as this night; her quick feminine sensibilities noticed the infusion in him. Her poor hungering spirit stirred deeply within her, some deep unutterable joy low in her heart cried up. But was it possible, could it be, that at last he was warming to her? Was joy like that to come? The wearying wait was nothing, the loneliness, the disappointment of life, if only—if only this could be true. She fastened his flowers in her bosom, those rich glowing petals so true a symbol of her life-long glowing passion. She pressed him to stay comment and could not.

The parting moment came, she saw he had something to say. Her quivering evelids fell, her heart thumped in anticipation. What shall it be, surely some assurance, some promise, some longed-for assurance? Perhaps at last he

would give her what she asked.

He put his arm round her, his lips lingered on hers, a soft caress clinging and true; his voice, low yet clear, spoke in her ear.

"Good-bye Winnie."

A short shiver caught her, she was stunned, disappointed, cut, her trembling expectation dashed again. Before she had

right recovered he had gone.

She heard his foot crunching down the path and the little gate opening and shutting. What was the meaning of it all, this late visit, this strange sympathy in him, this sudden departure? What had happened?

Why good-bye? Was he going away? Was he leaving the

country, leaving her?

The idea almost overpowered her, but quick as thought she caught up her hat from the hall-stand, and in her little slippers and silken dress she rushed into the night. She would find out where he was going, she would see and know the meaning of this. She called to him but he was beyond her voice she saw him go out through the gate, she ran out into the roadway,

but he was driving down the highroad on a car.

She flew after it, under the young hawthorn hedges and the first buds of the sweet-briars. Far and near stretched brilliant country, verdant and splendid, bounded by sloping hills, knolly and yellow with golden whin blossom. It looked delicious in the May night; never stretched a fairer country-side under human eye. Behind lay the snug little hamlet of Newtonbreda, sheltered, one might say, by the rich pasture lands of Belvoir Park, whose owner, the Lord Deramore, was the idol

of the villagers.

Away in front, slightly to the left, lay the lovely idyllic Purdysburn; not perhaps in all Ulster is there a more delightful place, so balmy, so beautiful for situation, its lovely old mansion-house hoary with tradition of the venerated family that for generations lived there. Away, yonder, not discernible to the eye, but to a person familiar with the vicinity almost present with its eerie uncanny air, is the wide circular expanse of the Giant's Ring, its massive relics of the Druidical mystery, like dark, grim, stern guardians of its sanctity, casting strange fearsome fancies broadcast on the night.

The white calm river so still, so unruffled, reflecting the whiter stars, and the wandering clouds of the summer night

hove in sight. An old coal barge lay against its bulrushed bank cusmoned amongst the sweet riparian flowerettes; it made a rare picture amid the smooth water, in the soft,

clear Irish summer night.

How still, how dreamy is the whole landscape, the coiling river like a shining serpent with the scarlet lock-gates like vivid bars across its back, the gnarled old tree-trunks making wry faces in the silver stream, the silent sweep of country on either side, the gloomy hills lying back asleep; everything is beautiful, but the woman panting down the roadway after the jogging car saw no beauty, nothing but the rolling car.

Deloney was sitting with bowed head thinking softly of her he had just left, of his own people, of his own home, he might not look upon again, and yet if he did perhaps he might bring her there. Not that she could ever be to him as Madalina, but the little creature was so faithful, her devotion deserved to be rewarded. Perhaps he would, perhaps he would bring himself to do it for her sake. The slow, wearying years must have been terrible to her ardent petulant passionate spirit.

Had she but known his thoughts; had she but surmised these things were passing in his head, what food, what strength it would have given her in this struggle she had undertaken. The blood was swelling her veins, purple bars were on her smooth olive temples, her heart thumped, thumped, thumped as if it would burst through that concinnous silken gown, her little feet in their Louis Quinze shoes were lacerated, but she flew on unheedful of the pain as if drawn by a magnet. Was there ever such a race? A small delicate woman against a horse, a weak inflated creature against a brute; but did the Cid's Babeica ever touch the ground more lightly? This was the speed of love, the swiftness of a woman to her dearest. Amid the rapidity of her daring a white fear was sneaking, a fear she would not entertain, a fear of failure her strength was giving out, her bleeding feet were going slower, the landscape swimming, she saw nothing but the old car jog, jog, jogging on before.

The river was behind; the way before was almost dark between high hedge-rows; soon, ah, soon, they would reach the main road, then perhaps help would turn up, she might meet a car and end this desperate race. She gathered herself for the last sprint up. The car was out now upon the Malone Road, so magnificent in a summer night with the glorious

beech and elms meeting overhead, and its splendid mansions nestling among well-kept gardens. She struggled on; her face was scarlet now, her throat parched, her head in a whirl, her feet burst through the dainty shoes, the perspiration dripping down every feature. She was holding out her best, her very best, but the taunting fear was whispering again in her ear, she might miss him, she might drop at any moment. She knew now if she did drop she could not rise. She staggered blindly on amid a sea of perspiration, her wild, bloodshot eyes upon the old crawling car. It was still in sight; on, on, on—should it be to death? She was no coward, she would never turn, she would stick it till she fell. Why were her knees shaking? Why this fearful tightening round her heart? Was there nothing to strengthen her, no spirit in the May night, no magic in the riding moon to flush her with a power equal to this flight? No, nothing in these things, but there was a stronger spirit, a truer magic in her own indomitable will. Her wild, terrified eyes were bursting as the car crept under the heavy trees, she half fancied she had lost it; with one awful cry she sprang forward, away as it were from herself and the galling fallacy of fear. There it was again, skirting the railing of the Methodist College. She had won. The city lights were about her, the car-stand over there at the side-walk; she slackened speed, a little giddy with exhaustion, upheld only by excitement and reeling like a drunken creature she reached the car-stand. The jarvey lifted her on to the seat, she pointed him with her trembling finger to the car in front, the man cracked his whip brightly and went forward.

### CHAPTER XXXII.

## "ULSTER FOR A SOLDIER."

NIGHT was spreading her wing over the gallant little capital of Ulster, not black sullen heavy night, but firmsy, silver, mimitable night, full of rare exquisite beauty, evanescent as a dream and fairer than a fancy. An Irish summer night is always lovely, but perhaps never so indescribably beautiful as when the summer is flush with early youth. Nature is fresh, growing, and tinged with promise, and the May moon, glowing in the violet star-filled Heavens, a disc of purest crystal light that touches the wide world with a charm that can be almost felt. The uplands were dotted with buttercups and daisies, the potato rigs were topped with promise, the young barley was shooting up, and the cornfields were sown. The country was splendid in the clear May night; down over the city hung

a fog which the street lights vainly strove to pierce.

The two cars had entered the city and crossed it, and were now upon the outskirts at a different side. The leading car had come up the well-known Falls Road and on into the country, when it passed under the shadow of Beechwood estate it halted, Lieutenant Deloney alighted, paid his jarvey, and turning up a narrow boreen that shot off the main road walked slowly forward. The way was very dark; the heavy trees of the rookery at the back of Beechwood made the darkness thick, while ever and anon a startled crow gave a wild ghostly caw. The pathway under foot was jagged and rising distinctly, great boulders of solid rock extended zig-zag through the whole length of the boreen. Had it been day light a curious phenomena of the a great rocks would have been visible, namely the prints of human feet, some normal, some exceedingly large embedded deeply in the solid rock. The children from all parts flocked to the "Giant's Foot;" to measure these funny feet-marks, in the evenings young lovers haunted the spot, its seclusion, its wildness and impenetrable darkness seemed expressly made to suit these whisperers.

This lane ends in a road-which crosses country and joins the White Rock Road that leads down into Ballygomartin and thence to Shankhill. From this latter road and up the White Rock had journeyed Crawford, his wife following foot for foot.

The country around was silent, deserted, lonely as the adjacent cemetery, but bathed in the glorious radiance of May moonlights every blade of grass seemed visible, and the surrounding mountains clear and grand, while the city lay

back clothed in mists.

From an open field presently rose up the stalwarth, large-limbed Belfast Boy. He had chosen this spot himself, partly because it was so lonely, so remote, so far above the din and confusion of the city or curious passers-by, but principally because it was homelands. His own native hills were around, his native air filling his nostrils. The scene was familiar, and he thought in a vague way that he would rather die here as any place about Belfast. Many a good standup fight he had seen about these old fields with "the boys" in other days.

Now it was his own fight, and he was ready.

He had been lying on the young grass, full of deep and brooding thought; as he rose, there behind in his shadow could be seen the tall, white-clad shrinking form of Molly, the rich clearness of the moonlight revealed the rare beauty of her face, white as marble with its brilliant setting of sunlight hair. Through the streets she had followed him up the old hilly Shankhill into the very precincts of their childhood; on through the old, old stone-built hamlet of Springfield with its dim old lamps built against the house sides; on into the lonely uphill road, further still, until he doubled and came slowly into the field facing the Giant's Foot "loanin." He had seen her, he had bidden her go back in sternest, coldest tones, but she had come every foot of the way although feeling as if flame licked her, when his clear cutting eye turned occasionally upon her. The old reverent fear of him was upon her.

What he saw, she saw;—the ugly, the dark to his clear, honourable eyes were insufferable; shame caught her in his blood-freezing clasp; she could have faced the whole world easier than her husband; but she had come after him, not for her own sake, but his, to save him if possible from himself and whatever mad thing he was about to do. When he rose

up slowly, her clear watching eyes missed not a movement, but never once did he look towards her, he was full of insulted wrath, degraded pride, and slighted honour. Her very company was an insult to him, the fearful degrading certainty of his relation to her seemed to strike at him more desperately when he saw her, but in the deep passion of these last few moments he put her and the grim fact that she was his wife from him as much as could be. He nerved himself for the ordeal approaching, he committed his children to the Keeper of the Fatherless, he asked God to have mercy on his soul, forgetting in that deep moment the condition, "Forgive us AS we forgive them who trespass against us." So he went on nearer than he had ever been to the great vastness of Eternity.

Molly also rose, her intense desire was to kneel at his feet, to beg his pardon, to ask his toleration and forgiveness, but she knew he would scorn her; he looked upon their union as a lie, a vile imposture too low to have a name. She felt that she dare not ask him anything for herself, even forgiveness.

In white terror she saw him draw the pistol case from his pocket, examine it carefully by the nitency of the white moonlight; his face was so calm, so stern, so determined, she had never seen anything so terrible as the aspect of his face.

Her teeth chattered, her trembling knees knocked together. Was she to see him do this deed, here on the open field with no one near but the stars of God watching in shining silence? Were her children to be robbed, flung out upon a cold, unsympathetic world by a rash and wicked act? Oh let him leave her, let him go wherever he liked, only not this—not this. Let the children be separated from her by land and sea, anything under heaven only that he, their father, should kill himself.

If she could only die, if only she could render up her soul, perhaps his wrath would be assuaged. What a release it would be. How pleasant to be down among the May flowers and never rise, to drown the anguish of her soul in the sweet perfumes of the wild flowerettes. She approached him full of hysteria, wrought up to the very highest point of excitement, her stumbling feet caught in her gown but she recovered herself and went up to him.

"Wil-lie."

He shook off her fingers from his arm, her touch made him

wince as if it were a serpent's corroding fang; she to him was as any other strange and loathsome woman.

"The children," she panted.

He took a step from her, for he saw a figure opening the rude gate from the roadway. The new comer was distinct in the clear, penetrating light, a tall, gracious, soldierly figure that strode with easy, almost careless grace over the green sward. He was punctual to the very moment, and Crawtord

went forward and bowed stiffly.

Molly's breath came thick and gasping, she had been wrong, but she understood now, they were going to shoot each other. For a second she was nonplus; then her spirit rose, her desire to save her husband increased with every instant. She ran forward, no trembling in her footsteps now, her feet scarcely touched the ground. Deloney flushed slightly when he saw her.

"Madalina, you here?"

Her Christian name in his mouth galled afresh the tall, bronzed, angry man. Deloney turned his glossy glance questioningly upon him.

"She followed me," replied Crawford curtly.

"Indeed."

There was something of inflection in the tone that did not escape the open ear of Crawford, but he could afford to ignore it from such a man. To Deloney it was barbarous that a woman's gentle eyes, a woman's tender heart should be here, especially that woman, that one of all the world's women. There was a brief pause, then he said slowly:

"I do not see how we are to proceed. If you take Mrs.—

Mrs. Crawford to her hotel I shall await your return."

"No," said Crawford bluntly, "this woman in no way influences or interrupts my arrangements. If she does yours, see you to it."

"Do you mean," said Deloney, "that you can be so brutal

as to proceed."

"If you call it so—yes."

Molly had come up to them, her fair head, from which the scarf had fallen shining in the opal lustral night, her rich dress vivid as snow. Never had she seemed to either of these men so markedly lovely as she stood between them, apart from each, her weakness and her strength strangely exaggerated,

her large brilliant eyes blazing like stars in her head. She addressed Deloney.

"Have you come to shoot my husband, you who promised

ne -----

"It is not my choice, but his; Madalina you must go away, you must," his voice took that tone so soft, so unmistakable

that was ever reserved for her.

"His choice!" she re-echoed as she turned to Crawford. "Crawford, do you know what you are doing, he a soldier, a trained officer of the British Army; are you going to be his target, to die like a dog out here in this lone field? Think of your children, your helpless, lonely children. You are unsuited for such a contest."

He did not deign to reply.

"Sir," he said coldly, "measure the ground."

She felt his slight, her sensibilities were never so acute, her pale lips met in ashen curves.

"You mean to go on?" remarked Deloney.

"Certainly."

They offered each other pistols, but each, after a hasty examination preferred his own, feeling that their grasp would be more sure upon their own familiar.

Molly's breath came thick and fast, horror seemed to sit upon her countenance, she grasped fully, freely what was

going to occur. Deloney was about to take his life.

From any other hand it would not be so intolerable, but from his, that fine, white jewelled hand that had wrought her such havoc, was now about to finish what he had begun so many dreary years ago. True in his way Crawford was a good shot, but the steady aim, the mortal exactitude of a trained hand would sweep his weak perfection away like a toy.

Her husband was going to his death, loathing her, with wrath and unforgiveness seething through every vein. She

went near and touched his arm.

"Wretch," he cried, "do not touch me, do not come near me."

"Yes," she said bitterly, "I am a wretch, but mark me, you

helped to make me one."

It was so gross, so vilely false, that his amazed angered eyes rested on her for half a second. Had she been a man he would have struck her where she stood. Such an outrageous lie never was flung in any man's teeth.

"Hear me," she said calmly, "before you go into eternity. Remember, as surely as Denny Deloney lifts his pistol, you are a dead man; these are your last moments. When I was a child you were kind to me, perhaps you loved me then; when I grew up you were always after me, I myself thought I loved you until I met Lieutenant Deloney. He flattered me, he was the first to tell me I was beautiful, and he was a gentleman, and his attention was sweet to my proud young soul. You told me he was a bad man, and I gave him up. When you asked me to marry you I consented, because you had been so kind and good to me. After you went to South Africa I met him by chance upon the Holywood Road. He asked me honourably and truly to be his wife. I had to refuse because I was engaged to you; he was mortified and took a cruel revenge. He took me-he stole me-he--." Her cheeks were flushed, her eyes full of excitement, her breast heaving. Crawford had turned away as if not listening. Deloney had gone over something like it in the evening, but it was fouler, uglier from her lips.

"Is it true?" he breathed thickly.

"Perfectly," was the brief, but significant corroboration from Deloney, who stood gazing again at Molly. He verily seemed to forget himself, to forget the whole world or why he was here at this hour of midnight. Even the little Lady Winnie of whom he had thought, was forgotten, and who at this moment had sunk down upon the beaten grass at the old field-gate and was peering through the thorn hedge with dilated eyes, watching this strange trio, watching especially the tall, white clad woman who had stolen her sweetheart, she was panting, overcome by her recent exertion. Curiosity, burning, anxious, raving, was the strong element that sustained her now from giving way to the utter exhaustion that was over her from limb to limb.

Molly was still speaking, repeating in vibrating whispers

the galling truth of bygone days.

"He swore to make it all right, he took me to the altar of St. Anne's Church and left me there unwed, a spectacle of shame and scorn for all Belfast. Do you know what that meant for me? Madness, I went mad. When I recovered he sought me again, but I was not to be deceived a second time."

"Pardon me, Madalina," interrupted Deloney softly, his dark glossy eyes seeking hers. "I was sincere, I meant to

redeem every promise, it broke my heart that you refused. In this hour, as God is my witness, my proposals were honour-

Crawford's clear eyes thrilled him through and through, but Denny bore that straight gaze without a wince. Molly also looked at Deloney, reproach, unbelief, from her eye struck

"You did not believe me," he said in a pained tone.

Such a direct and clear reply hurt him, it flashed over the parted years the reason why they had been so. He made no

reply, and his eyes fell upon the grass at their feet.

Crawford flung round angrily, in spite of himself it maddened him to hear Deloney speak to her in this strain. The story his wife unfolded almost undid the giant stress he had upon himself. It was hard to hear, it was cruel to learn that the child he had loved and nurtured through the dreary winter of her childhood had been trampled immediately she raised her little head into grown-up life. The day was that he would have avenged it, but now he had enough to do to avenge his own wrong, what she had done on him no honourable man could look over.

"Deloney," he said, almost roughly, "let us go on." "Willie," she cried, wringing her cold, white hands, "for give me, I have suffered."

"Never," he said, bitterly, "never. A falsehood like yours, a deceit so shameless, no man, who calls himself a man, could forgive. I wrote to you honest and true that if you wanted your liberty you could take it. If you had had the principle of a dog you would have done so and never have dirted me."

Deloney's aristocratic face went pale as death. He had never heard such a brutal rebuke given any woman, but the greatest sting of it was that he was the guilty person, he not Madalina, should get every word. Molly was fluttering wildly her white face rigid as death, every hope in her was dying. He was casting her off with a vengeance.

"You are right," she returned slowly, "I never should have married you. I did not go to the Cape with that inten-

tion."

"Why did you do it then?" he cried fiercely.
"Because." she said softly, "because you cared for me and I-God help me-cared too."

"Never," he cried bitterly, "it was only pretence, I saw you loved him that evening you were with him up the Antrim Road. I saw it with my own eyes, and I was a mad idiot not to believe it."

His voice was awful, his eyes furious, he felt like falling on the two of them and pounding them into pulp. If she had only told him before they were married, if she had even half told it, but to marry him, to hoodwink him so many years, to lead him on blindfolded to a discovery like this was beyond his endurance.

Molly's hands clasped and unclapsed; the wedding ring upon her finger seemed as it were to slip off of itself, she balanced it from hand to hand, it was a massive ring, made of pure dust

from his first mine.

"You cannot forgive," she murmured, "then let me end our marriage, let me stand as his target, it is only meet that the world should be cleansed of me, and that you, so good and true, you should be free. Here," she added, "is our wedding ring.

"Damn you and your rings," he said, his passion rising

almost beyond control.

"Denny," she cried turning to him, "Fire. It shall be

the best compliment you ever offered."

Her burning eves lav on him, her lips open in darkest trouble, her whole aspect one of broken helplessness. For a half second he was tempted to put his arms round her with his old fervour and fury, then to lay the pistol to her head and to his own. It would be sweet to him to die in her arms, to feel her near and about him in the supreme moment. her heart were only his, if —— he might have done it, but she was all for this strange strong blunt man, every throb of her soul was toward him, no room in her mind or thought for Denny, this man was everything to her. It was a pity, a great pity that he had made rupture between them, that he had broken the peace and harmony of their union. He was ashamed of this hour for which he was responsible. What could he do to reunite them—to give her her heart's desire, to put them for ever into each other's arms, to wipe out his own dark part in this woman's life, to ease his own soul of somewhat of its burden?

Crawford scowled upon them. She could not move him. These words of hers were only the bold, brazen badinage, the extravagant talk of a guilty woman. A grim expression came upon his countenance, this interruption and futile talk were not what he came here for.

"Sir, we must act or retire."

"You are the offended."
"Well, let us go on."

" Certainly."

There was no cavil at her presence now. Deloney was thinking deeply. The time, perhaps, had come for his penance; he would make it, and if man ever was truly penitent, the God who readeth hearts could read his. He had seldom prayed, but here under the silent stars, facing this enraged and outraged man, he prayed to the Highest. The scene at the death of his little one returned, the voice of the Christ seemed calling him, the voice of the little child repeating that simple hymn seemed calling him. Surely He who died for us would not be angry at him if he died to re-instate Madalina, to show her that his sorrow was genuine, that he, who had done her such wrong, at least had done her one right in acknowledging his wrong and trying to satisfy the anger of her husband. He offered himself to God for mercy, for hope, for Christ's sake.

Then going over to Madalina, and like a polished Cicisbeo,

went down on one knee.

"Good-bye, Madalina, somewhere in the great Hereafter

you and I shall part no more. Farewell."

For one flashing moment their eves met, a strange consciousness that was half pain caught her heart, a feeling that had come to her in the death room of the child that perhaps he had really been sincere. She had never realised how hard it is for a man to shake off the shackles of his upbringing, that veneer of good form, that hypocrisy toward public opinion, that inner superstitious subjection to the Church which, to a greater or lesser degree, folds every born Roman Catholic. These were obstacles to the young man's inner earnest wish to go with Madalina, almost insuperable obstacles to a spoiled, moneyed, weak, young man, in whom had fostered the idea that a wild sin here and there did not so much matter when the money could make everything right in the end. Ah! he had, from bitter experience, learned the fallacy of such trash. When the gold cannot undo the awful results here, how can it undo them There? Deloney blamed

himself, but he blamed also the false ideas he had imbibed, and his heart seeking for something outside, better, lovelier than himself had encircled in deepest passionate devotion upon this girl of his choice. Perhaps his love was more complete and whole-hearted than that of a better balanced, more moral man. He loved her, and even in this moment he could not get from it. His spirit yearned to her in this hour of her darkness, and wrestled with itself how he would do her bidding, how give her her husband. Again his soul rose to His Maker in one wild inner cry, that defenceless, helpless cry of a soul entering its awful darkness. He who casts none away heard that deep prayer of the broken penitent.

A white silk handkerchief made a little streak across the soft green grass, Crawford said, aside to Madalina: "Go out

of danger."

But she stood motionless, her hands folded tightly, her eyes starting as it were out of her head. She hoped to be shot; there was no necessity, no reason why she should live; her husband had cast her off, and her children were taken from her, it would be relief to slip away.

"Ready," said Crawford, gruffly.
"Ready," was the low response.

Deloney covered that powerfully built opponent with his eye; Madalina was right, that muscular frame was an easy target, one little motion of his finger and the millionaire was as dead as carrion. An intense moment, swift, awful, the breath in every one of them held back—the suspense gripping and overmastering. Then swifter than breath and silenter, a tongue of liquid fire, clear and blue, and terrible in transparency, played in the eyes of all of them, dazzling them with

its crystal brilliance.

What was it? Not pistol-fire? Nay, nay, something quicker, deadlier—something that asked neither leave nor liberty from men or mind or matter, that laughed at man's puny weapons of offence and defence. A sickening, terrified sense crept over them at the strange and vivid thing, a hush that no man may describe, a silence that defied them and hugged them in its mute, eloquent embrace; then, quicker than an eyewink, the brilliant crystal dash passed, flashing from their dazed and dazzled sight, far away into the dark blue summer midnight.

#### CHAPTER XXXIII.

CRAWFORD stood almost transfixed, his face a ghastly hue, his hand clenched on the pistol, lowered feebly. An awful thing had happened, too terrible almost for imagination, too deep for human speech. The strong man within him cowered, he could barely keep his feet, his heart cried in its deepest recess those old strange words:

"How dreadful is this place."

An awful consciousness was upon him, a thought too overpowering almost for expression. God had done somewhat. God had, as it were, taken the job out of his hand; that Light was the work of the Great Unseen Hand. He was almost undone, the shock, the sensations were so different to the coarse, common animal sentiments of his bosom, that he scarcely realised the magnitude and meaning of what was enacted before his eyes.

Presently he recovered himself a little; his dazed eyes saw clearer. There—there—. What was that?—that awful object—Oh, God, and he closed momentarily his eyes.

With a low cry he staggered forward. Deloney was still standing, his arm outstretched, the pistol in his nerveless hand. Over his whole person and uniform and hands a strange blight had come, his countenance was darkened, his features too, and his scarlet tunic was charred and blackened.

He was burnt literally to death. The lightning, the summer fire had penetrated between bone and sinew, had licked up the Incolood in his veins. God had taken him at his word. God had permitted him to die for Madalina, to atone thus for his past, to teach her husband the lesson of his life.

Deloney kept his feet scarcely half a second, then with a smothered moan he fell. Molly, with an almost superhuman

mastery of her own terror, rushed to him.

"What is it Denny? What has happened?"

There was a brief distressing pause as the affrighted woman fell upon her knees beside him, his dark glossy eyes full of extremest pain turned upon her. In the first furious onset of that suffering he could not speak, but feebly he tried to offer her his helpless burnt hand. She took it wildly. The tears that seemed to have left her eyes for ever gathered quickly, and fell thickly on his fingers.

"Denny," she cried, "Denny, tell me what has happened to you? Tell me, tell me?"

"The lightning," he whispered, "struck me. It is best this way, I meant to let Crawford shoot me. God has done it

His way. Crawford," he breathed, heavily.

Crawford, almost paralyzed, advanced slowly. He was a man of deeply religious mind; no one saw or heard of his dealings with his Maker; what had occurred was to him a voice, a message, an action, a salvation from Heaven. God had saved him from blood. God had wrenched the pistol from his poor human hand; the man was dying, no second giance was needed to reveal that. Crawford became painfully aware that in the rash rush of this engagement, he had neither wine nor water, flask nor such like about him.

"Do you suffer?" he asked, and there was a curious tone in the big man's voice. "I must go and bring help; there is a cottage in the Giant's Foot loanin."

The dying man strove to hold out his hand. Crawford diffidently, and labouring under deep emotion, put Deloncy's into his hand; brown, muscular, and almost coarse it looked beside the finely shaped hand of Deloney. Then Deloney nerved himself amid fearful agony and conscious exhaustion.

"Crawford, you are an honourable man; promise me to be reconciled to -your wife. I was the sinner, she was only the sinned against. God is punishing me. What appeares Him must satisfy you. Let me die easy, knowing you are

one again."

The strong brusque Belfast Boy trembled like a leaf. Even then he found it a struggle, but grace was given him, and after a brief silence in a low deep voice he said huskily: "It shall be as you wish."

Deloney's face lit up with one of his old smiles; he knew a man like Crawford would never go back on his word. In fearful pain, but with his soul eased, he clasped their hands across his body. He seemed to collapse after that, and Crawford disengaging his hand from Molly's, ran across the

field toward the cottage for assistance.

Molly was weeping bitterly; she understood everything now, when it was too late. Their divided past stood out, clear, dark, startling in its rigid lines. What under heaven is more cruel than the resurrection of first love, so hopeless, so rank, so evanescent, so futile? His pain was passing, a sweet cessation from that wild sting enveloped him, but his heart fluttered.

tion from that wild sting enveloped him, but his heart fluttered.
"Madalina," he said weakly, "it is right between you now, I have given you back your husband but when your time is up, when life is gone by, when you come to take your last gate, remember that Denny, your Denny and Little John are awaiting on the other side. Madalina, my darling, we shall

be waiting."

" Is there nothing I can do for you?" she cried, feeling

helpless and vividly conscious that he was passing.

"Denny, my sweetheart, once I loved you as you loved me; if I had only believed you everything would have been different."

He smiled brightly, he understood fully, such sweet words helped him in this hour. She stooped her golden head over him, her lips lay on his, a long lingering intense caress full of nervous tremor and wild, impossible, returning love. She understood him at last, she believed him now.

His dark glossy eyes lit up, they gathered her as it were into themselves, his arms were useless, lying on the grass,

poor, withered, blasted fragments.

"Could you sing?" he whispered in a low breath, "sing to me—John's little hymn. You remember Madalina when we heard it first, away up Shankhill We were both young, we had never dropped a tear. Madalina, in the new world we shall be young again, we shall be together again—we——."

His voice fell away, he was rapidly sinking, but his clear eyes were fastened on her. In an inner desperate stromboli of emotion she tried to sing soft, low, full of a pathos no human voice had ever taken out there in that wilderness of a field, with the chalk face of the Squire-hill lying back in the distance, and the rude brow of Divis brooding silently, and the city stretching in the swamp below; and here, under her eyes the dying form of her soldier-lover. How sweetly she sang. Like silver hope, it warped around his clouding senses, it brought to his mind that old day when they were exchanging hearts,

it opened to him the new Day rapidly dawning when he would be tree, free from the sin that he had sinned, when the great experience would be realised. Free, not only for time, but for all Eternity.

On the cross He shed His blood, From sin to set me free.

He looked on at her, his last look, his fluttering heart was

almost still, his breath less than a whisper.

"Madalina, I understand Him, His work; Jesus the Redeemer, the Buyer back; Peace—Peace—with God—with us. I—am going, dearest—ah—my—little

child, my-Je-su!-"

It was over, his chin fell upon his breast, but his eyes were open, open upon Madalina. She was gazing intently at him, by superhuman effort smothering the wild anguished cry on her lips. He was gone, she knew, gone for ever; the pain that swept across her heart almost swallowed her, it wrung her to the depths. Presently, with gentle trembling hands, she took the white scarf from her shoulders and laid it reverently over his face, covering it from the night—this strange, awful night, with its brilliant piercing moon, and flashing footlights of God.

It was a pretty act, no one in the whole world could have

appreciated it more than he to whom it was done.

She sat by the dead, with the moonbeams playing round her, full of an anguish too bitter, too desperate for simple words to relate. The whole Past pictured itself around her, its sweetness, its shadow, its passing into the great Beyond.

"Oh, my God," she moaned, "blot out this Past, I did not

see things as I do to-night."

Down there at the old gate was another woman, not weeping, but breathing slower and slower. She had watched intently every motion. Every action was plainly visible in the startling clearness of the moonlight. Yea, her fervid fancy grasped more or less clearly by their gestures, their words and meaning. She saw the pistols passing between the men and the rude contempt of the big powerfully built stranger for *That one* of the golden hair. Her heart was in her mouth, but struggling with her exhaustion she managed to get to her feet. She would go to Denny, she would throw herself upon him, she would shield him from the pistol of that big, fierce, giant-like man. Whatever was wrong it was in connection

with her, that hateful woman who had been a curse to Denny, who had stolen him from her. She would go, she would put her arms round his neck, whoever shot Denny would shoot her.

She tottered forward a few steps, but the effort was beyond her; she stood panting, her hand upon her side, her eyes fixed on that strange trio. As she stood looking, her face became suddenly transfused with an inexpressible terror. She saw that strange sight in all its magnificent majesty, saw it flash over the old dim mountains, light up with wind lastre the entire countryside, play in the lonely field around the little group, envelope them, divide them, encircle Denny, light him up with a ray clearer than sunshine, blue white, penetrating, incom-

prehensible, swift, sure, separating, destructful.

The glory of the Lord in the wilderness! She had heard of it, was this it? with its sweeping irresistible evanescent flight? It approached her, flying, flashing, glorious with spirit-speed. She stood awestruck, expecting she knew not what, but it passed above her, quicker than an eyewink. Then she saw with glared eye and ruptured heart that he was down, down to his death, that fine true instinct of woman soured her of it. With a low cry she too fell only some yards from him; her poor groping hands felt for his flowers pinned upon her breast. They were all that she had of him now, and they were all she could ever have; her fingers met around their vivid, gorgeous petals.

"Denny, your flowers—my flowers—your last little trophy. Even in your trouble you did not forget poor Winnie

and her common love."

A wild opening and shutting of those chatoyant eyes, a whirl in the brain, a spasmodic flutter, of that quick little heart, and she was as he was, dead, under the silent shining

of the stars.

That dreadful race had been too much, it had cost her life. Ar it is blood vessel, unknown to herself, had been stealing her away. The last moment was hurried by the agonizing consciousness that the light with its invincible power had killed him. They were both gone to their account, and over each might have been written that unchanging synopsis of such lives: "The end of these things is death."

### CHAPTER XXXIV.

CRAWFORD ran down the field. As he neared the gate he saw a woman lying apparently ill. He hesitated, then recalling the black charred creature a little further away he passed on, thinking that her case was doubtless not so urgent. He took the little thatched cottage on his way, asking the good people to bring stimulants, water and blankets; that an accident had occurred in the field at the head of the loanin'. Then he rushed down the rugged steep lane out unto the high road.

Here the car that Lieutenant Deloney had used was loitering. The jarvey had not been asked to wait, but he thought it not unlikely that his fare might give him another job before morn-

ing.

Crawford welcomed the sight of it, he jumped on quickly

with the vague direction, "the nearest doctor."

The carman comprehended, cracked his whip and drove citywards. They had not to go far, and soon the car was coming back with the doctor. Crawford told him briefly what had happened without entering into details regarding what brought them to that wilderness at the dead of night. He was pale and affrighted, and trembling visibly. The vision of that sight encompassed him still, that light playing in swift deadly silence leaving that remnant of a man in its trail seemed upon him; he felt that it would never pass from him, strong, conscientious man that he was, it had humbled him, told him with tongue of fire that one day he would lie as low as that poor burned fellow creature, one day be at the mercy of the Great Power that defied man and Time and sense and space. Ah! That made him yield to the dying man, that showed him he must be merciful if he wanted mercy.

The doctor passed through the old gate swinging open now. As he crossed the field he stopped at the woman lying with her fingers locked upon the red flowers at her breast, and a few people gaping about. A superficial examination was enough. Without a remark he passed on further to where another small

knot of people were congregated, some looking with scared faces at the burned body, others trying to soothe the wild

hysterical sobs of the lady.

Crawford held the lantern they used close to the corpse; the blackened face, the burned clothing dropping off as the faintest zephyr touched them, made a fearful spectacle, but one more startling, more telling in its swift message to Crawford's soul rose up before him. The dead man's eyes were wide open, gazing full upon everyone of them. As Crawford bent forward with the lantern he saw in those open eyes a stange thing. Molly looked out at him from those dead open eyes, she was photographed faithfully, clearly as if upon a prepared plate. It made his blood turn cold, he never heard of anything like it, but there it was, real, distinct, clear and unmistakable, the very expression of her face, the snowy whiteness of her dress showing vividly in the dead dark eyes.

His hand trembled, and that sick ghastly hue that overspread his face at the lightning came again. He reeled slightly, and the doctor took the lantern from his shaking hand. A faintness came upon him, a failing as it were at the secret springs of his life, the strong man within him bowed at that queer and terrifying picture. Was the dead man taking her away with him, away, away, where eye or mind has never wandered? Was he? or was it simply that the image in the dying man's mind was so powerful that it threw into those eyes an impression. He knew not the cause, whether psychological or under the influence of the light, purely scientific; but the fact was staggering and unmistakable. The doctor also saw it. His quick eye recognised the weeping woman, then with steady capable fingers he closed those burdened eyes. Thus her old lover took that strange wierd yet faithful picture of her with him to the grave, and her husband carried it during the remainder of his life as a haunting disturbing memory.

The doctor turned his attention to Mrs. Crawford, the others were beyond his care. She was labouring under great hysteria,

sobbing excessively and trembling in every limb.

They led her away, the doctor thoughtfully taking her aside from the dead woman almost across their path. The police were appearing upon the scene, but the doctor waived them back, and went cautiously down the boreen with his patient to the car waiting at the road. Crawford came too, he left her at the hotel door in charge of the physician, and truly she required his services, and ere morning she was removed quietly

to a private hospital.

Crawford went back again to that dreadful field; he was the only person who could tell much about the dire occurrence, and the police were bustling and taking notes while waiting the arrival of the ambulance waggon to remove the bodies to the morgue. Crawford found himself face to face with a desperate duty; in that mixed crowd there was no one else to do it, no one except the police, and he felt somehow that in this case they were not exactly suitable, neither was he himself, yet he was the only one except the officers.

This desperate thing from which he shrank, yet that seemed to encompass him, was the taking the black tidings to Deloney's people. It would be a hard job, and it seemed to be at his door. He told the police, and finally it was arranged that one of them should go along with him to Deloney Hall.

They drove quickly through the now deserted streets, brilliant almost as day with the powerful midnight moonlight. Soon the smoking horse stood at the gates of the mansion

house.

Light was burning in the gate lodge, and in the deep night silent voices could be heard talking; the rattling of the car made a jar, those inside the lodge caught it, and a man came

out quickly and opened the gate.

As they drove up the stately avenue Crawford became painfully nervous, shrank in actual pain before the catastrophe he was about to announce. He saw the splendid old house with its unmistakable air of wealth, the stately trees, the glowing terraces, the lovely lawn, the long range of dome-roofed conservatories; the entire atmosphere was redolent of good family and position. That old hesitancy, that uncomfortable sensation that he had had in early life when before people better born than himself awoke anew. He forgot he was the millionaire, he almost believed himself the carpenter seeking the presence of the aristocrat. The memory of the old gentleman was fresh within him, and Crawford knew that the news he bore would strike him to the heart. It was an awful errand to come on; as they neared the front door his courage almost failed. He leaned across the car to the policeman.

"I wish you would go without me."

"And I," returned the officer, "think you should go with-

out me. My presence will shock the old gent, before you

open your mouth."

When they actually were before the house they noticed what Deloney himself had noticed that the rooms were lighted, and that numerous lights were passing and repassing but steadily returning to one room. Was anything unusual astir? Had the black tidings got here before them? Was there any meaning in these moving lights, this commotion in the house? For many years the strange encumbrance, the shrinking at these people, had been upon Crawford's mind; he had wriggled it off, he had kept it out of his life, but now it had entered, he was bound and broken weighted in body, soul and spirit by the canker of the Deloneys.

He stood still swithering, labouring under his own repagnance, and striving to get beyond personal feelings. The charred body lying in the old field with its open eyes a vered with her image seemed to come near, right into the presence of the haughty old linen lord while he stood undecided on the

doorstep.

He pulled himself together, "I've never been a coward," he thought to himself, "I will go through with chis; it shall be the last of the Deloneys for me. The old man must be prepared, his years demand it, and it shall be a hard blow to his grey hairs."

He nerved himself and rang the bell.

The old porter shuffled forward and threw open the door. The poor old being had been crying, his eyes and features

were swollen and his limbs trembling.

The death of the child had cut him up, touched the very deepest springs in his old bosom. Little John had been precious to him, a little bright flower that had suddenly spring up at his feet, that he had loved and cherished. He thought Crawford and the police officer came now in connection with the lad's sudden decease.

Car find asked for Mr. Deloney, senior. Old Rob hesitated, then he answered quietly that the master had retired, that

he could not be disturbed.

Crawford replied that he was sorry, but it was necessary that he should speak with him. During this little parley a door facing them opened, and a lady crossed the hall. She was Lady Lyle, looking pale and affrighted, but calm. The child's death had struck at her also, ever since that night in

the Town Hall when she had taken him up in her arms and borne him home to Deloney Hall the child had been almost as precious to her as her own. She had pled for him sturdily, and would have taken the infant herself if her foster-parents refused. It was a personal grief to Mab, and she felt it bitterly, but her tears had been shed in private; the best and noblest in her came out under this suffering, she forgot herself comforting her parents, soothing the proud aged lady, pointing out in broken whispers that the dear child would pray to God for her, that his pure soul would help her in the other world. She dried her father's tears, and patted his poor wrinkled brow, and by her gentle persuasion got him wiled into his own room, safe from the sight of the home-coming of the cold white body, and the laying out of the little corpse.

When she saw Crawford she stopped stock-still; an apprehension, a presentiment, indescribable but terrible caught her. She recognised him at once, Madalina's husband. What brought him to this house on such a night as this? Was this visit in connection with the little dead love in the drawing-room, or

what?----

Her heart seemed to stand still, she felt it was not, she remembered Denny's expression, his lingering looks, his hungering eyes following her that night in the theatre. There was something about Denny that night that had struck her uncomfortably. It rose in her mind like pain in this man's presence. Where was Denny? He had not been in the house the whole evening. No one knew his whereabouts, he had left no message; surely, oh, my God, surely he had not dared approach her. So flew her thoughts, her large dark eyes fastened on the Belfast Boy in strained expectancy. She led him into the dining-room; the policeman hung back, Crawford went alone. Here the same noticeable, charming atmosphere of rank and refinement was discernible. The rich wainscoting of the room, the old oaken furniture, the massive silver on the sideboard, the priceless masterpieces upon the walls, the costly bronzes, everything indicated the status of the family who lived here.

Crawford felt rather than saw these things; he was too painfully close to his terrible task to heed much. He looked at the lady, then a silence, an awe stole over him. He, of course, did not know her. He thought most probably she was Lieutenant Deloney's sister. She saw he was agitated, and in

her quick ready way went to the sideboard and filled him up a glass of spirits.

"Pardon me," she said quickly and kindly offering it, "I

am Lady Lyle."

Crawford's face flushed deeply. It was as a blow upon his innermost wound, as if she said I am your wife's relative, I know your position, I know everything about her. He took the glass in his trembling hand, and laid it on a chair beside him.

"Thank you," he said simply, almost shamefacedly. "Drink it," she urged, "you are ill, you are unstrung." "True." he returned, "but this is not the night that I dare

touch spirits."

"Is anything wrong?" she said, her face going pale, "Your

wife," she finished, her breath dropping to a whisper.

"I cannot tell you," he said, not noticing her remark, "I must see Mr. Deloney himself; I mean his father," he added,

painfully.

"His father!" she repeated, "why his father?" and that wild uneasiness in her bosom beat harder; her eyes fell before this great strong man, and she was ashamed to name Denny's

"I must see him," returned Crawford, "I have to see him." "You know he is very old, he is very ill; the sudden death

of the child has almost undone him."

Then Mab shivered, she knew she had made a fausse pas, it was grievous that she should have mentioned the child to Crawford. It had slipped from her in her anxiety to shield her aged parent. She knew that the old man had all that he could bear

"What child?" said Crawford, "not your own I hope."

"No," said Mab softly and stopped. Her mind was filled anew with the little dead love as she called him, lying cold as snow and whiter in the little casket in the drawing-room. She herself had had it put there, he was so beautiful, so like an angel with his softened smile and princely silence that she had him mo the choicest room. Her tears, bitter and salt had fallen over him, her pravers earnest and sincere had risen at his side, her own hands had put the lilies on his breast, and settled the silver crucifix in his marble-like fingers. Her love for the child, her pain at his decease had lifted her far beyond the fear of the dire disease that had laid him low.

As she sat looking at this great powerful man labouring so

acutely with some distress, the child, so pure, so calm, so holy seemed to come between them. It gave her strength, it nerved her to do her duty as she conceived it; she approached Crawford.

"You must tell me," she said firmly, "no matter what is wrong. My father, Mr. Deloney, is now in bed, and too ill

to be disturbed."

"Are you a daughter of this house?"

"I am a foster-daughter, my guardians have been to me parents, and I love them as such."

"Is there no man to whom I may speak?"

"No," she said, truly, more truly than she guessed, "there is no man of this house, and I must stand before my parents if I can, to make it lighter for them."

"Sit down," said Crawford, trembling himself anew as the

fearful disclosure crept closer up to him.

She sat down, her pale hands clasped, her fearing eyes fixed

upon his face, she dreaded she knew not what.

Crawford opened his lips, he never quite could recall how he began, but he knew he told her from the beginning to the end. As he advanced into his recital, the perspiration began to hail off him, and again and again he wrung his hands in darkest distress. The picture grew under his strong tense unvaruished touches until Mab, with her quick Irish imagination saw it as it were with her own eyes. The lonely field outside the town, the brilliant sky, the heated colloquy, the measured distance, the lifted pistols, the trembling woman—ah—.

That awful, indescribable scene of blinding brilliance, that presence as it were of Infinity, that Something that doeth as it listeth in the realms of men, That wrapped him up, That left him on the sward a poor charred remnant, That pushed back Crawford as a clumsy bungler, flung him on his haunches as It passed on with gorgeous glorious triumphant evanescence.

Mab listened, her eyes starting in her head. As the story gripped her she had risen and crept nearer and nearer Crawford until as he finished, she stood before him with a terrified face, and with panic in her breast.

"Tell me not that it took him," she gasped in a husky

whisper.

The man was silent, as his own eyes had looked as it were again at that dazzling light, at that burnt thing lying on the sward he shrank, until to Mab's frightened eyes he smalled

and shrivelled where he sat, his strong man bowed within They were both almost overcome, then Crawford gradually became conscious of the lady's awful agitation. With shaking fingers he lifted the glass of spirits, and held it to her lips. Then she, though barely conscious returned the kindness in true Irish spirit motioning the glass back to his lips. Crawford was conscious of something in this talk with Lady Lyle, in this grim relation that relieved and lightened the desperate tension upon his heart and soul. She was the first that he had directly told, and the conscious sympathy of her presence and listening ear did him good. Ever after he recalled Mab with gratitude, and there was formed between them that night a friendship, an understanding that continued to the end.

Mab's heart froze within her. The first shock almost undid her, the wildness, the terribleness of the calamity shook her to the depths, but the glaring startling fact that no mortal hand had brought about Denny's death held her in check. It was almost too terrible for thought. Denny's past seemed to flap about her like a bird dark and ominous. She remembered his unfaithfulness to the Church, his bitter words against Her, and here was the end of it, in the twinkling of an eye, in a moment he thought not of. Oh, Denny, poor, misguided, foolish Denny. In that dark hour Mab was comforted at the thought of the little child being gone before him, so that the pure soul of the child might plead for him at the high Tribunal. She saw in the taking of the little one the kindness of God for this awful catastrophe. She covered her face with her hands with the wrung cry:

"On his soul, sweet Jesus, have mercy."

Sweet Jesus had had mercy, and the sinner for whom Mab prayed with the faith and charity of a devout Roman Catholic had slipped away, conscious of "peace with God through our

Lord Jesus Christ."

## CHAPTER XXXV.

WHILE they lingered enveloped with the darkness and pain of the dread occurrence the door opened softly, and Sir Percy Lyle entered. His coming was a relief; his wife turned to him for comfort and support, she could hold out no longer. With a low sob that was half a wail she fell into his arms. Crawford was also relieved, it recalled him to himself, the way before him hardened under his feet in the presence of a man. He scarcely recollected that this gentleman was his wife's cousin, but the swift assurance that a capable person to take the onus and painful remainder of this business from him was in the room acted like a tonic. The Belfast Boy was spared another recital of the calamity, for the police officer in the vestibule had already given Sir Percy the information.

When Sir Percy Lyle had taken Mab away to her room he joined Crawford again in the dining-room. He urged him to join him at supper, but Crawford, gazing straight into his eyes,

answered in low rugged tones:

"I could not; if I broke bread in this house I think it would choke me. I never would have come into it only I felt for the cld man, for his grey hairs."

The baronet thanked him, but urged no more; he understood

fully.

"You must come with me to my house," he said, deeply touched at Crawford's consideration for Denny's father. "You must bring your children, and make it your home until—until you are settled."

"Thank you," said Crawford, rising, "you are very kind." The baronet also rose, he was going with him into the city, there were many things he felt it his duty to attend to. One was to send the Bishop to this blighted house so that he might sustain the aged couple in this unexpected trial. Another, to stop a glaring account of the affair appearing in the press, and above all to support this strange strong man in this trouble that had pierced him in a man's weakest spot.

Sir Percy was under the impression that Crawford knew of little John and of his death. As they passed into the hall, the drawing-room door happened to be open. From the passage could be seen quite clearly the gleaming white trestle with its beautiful burden, the blessed candles glowing around it in the darkened room-like stars.

Sir Percy looked into Crawford's face.

"Yonder lies the little lad."

"What little lad?"

The baronet's lips were dumb, he understood with annoyance that he had taken too much for granted. Crawford stopped on his step a second, then quickly, steadily, he walked forward into the drawing-room. Perhaps it was best that he did so, best for the future that he understood the problem of the child was solved. As he approached the bier and recognised the child he started violently. It was a shock, it seemed only an hour ago since the boy bright, beautiful, happy had looked into his face, had asked his kiss. He remembered it so distinctly, the pain, the rupture in his own bosom were at their height, but the boy was beaming. Although the child's coming meant the wreckage of his happiness, the tearing up by the roots the tendrils of his very being, this cold silence, this sudden picture of omnipresent Death abashed him anew. One stray consolation mingled in the pained surprise of the moment, he was glad he had yielded to the child's request, glad that he had kissed the little upturned face, now upturned in Death. It seemed to ask him again with an eloquence no tongue can master. He struggled with himself, his inner repugnance, but the golden tone of conquering death led him, then with trembling shaking fingers he lifted back the white veil, and laid his lips reverently on the still cold brow.

As he laid the soft tulle back over the dead again, he caught Sir Percy's eyes fixed upon him. He winced, inwardly he felt that he was watching him, and that he wondered why he did so to this child, his wife's child, the symbol of her dishonoured

Past.

He flushed purple, and in deepest silence turned out of the room. Perhaps he would have been more than human if he had not felt as he passed out of the portals of that old home of the Deloneys the deepest humiliation that ever fell upon a man, yet he had never in his whole life played the man more truly than to-night.

As Sir Percy and he sat side by side driving into the town they began to talk with faces turned aside into the glimmering

mist of early dawn.

Sir Percy was shocked to learn that Crawford knew nothing of the sad Past until the child came into his apartment in the hotel asking for his mother. Sir Percy flushed angrily in the semi-darkness, he knew who had devised such a deed, and the old secret rage and anger in his soul at Deloney burned anew. He felt within his heart of hearts that he well deserved the fate that had overtaken him, nevertheless he was vexed at the sudden death of the lovely child, yet as he glanced at the man beside him he became convinced that it was well ordered. He told Crawford the entire story as he knew it, even of that night when Madalina brought the infant to the Town Hall before the entire company, and how his wife fetched him to Deloney Hall, and he had been brought up there.

As they neared the city they lapsed again into silence. Sir Percy was thinking of Madalina; he was anxious to hear how she was, yet he hesitated to take the initiative. As the car swung into Donegall Place Crawford himself told the carman

to stop at the Imperial Hotel.

On making inquiries they found that Mrs. Crawford had been removed to a private hospital, the doctor having found that this step was absolutely necessary.

### CHAPTER XXXVI

THE next few days were very dark, ladened with a darkness that never wholly lifted from Crawford's life. The inquiry into the death of Lieutenant Deloney was over, the finding, of course, was death from being struck with lightning, and a motion of condolence with his family was passed by the Coroner's Court. Crawford, of course, had to be present, but he had scarcely a word to speak; nevertheless the gloom of the proceedings fell upon him. The second inquiry into the death of Lady Winnie was also held the same day. The medical evidence in her case was death from internal hemorrhage due to the bursting of a blood vessel. There was no one to identify her save the police officers who knew her and the little cottage where she lived. Over the privacy of her life

the curtain of charity was mercifully drawn. Thus these two who had met in the siege of Life passed far beyond the human hand of the Law, into the larger, more merciful Hand of Him who loves. The press notices of these sad occurrences appeared side by side. There was a short sketch of Deloney's life, his birth and parentage, his education, his military career, his distinguished service in South Africa. The articles wound up with regrets at his untimely death, and sympathy for his parents with the final intelligence "We understand the funeral

is to be private."

The funeral was to be private; nevertheless a very large cortege left Deloney Hall. A good many of the late gentleman's brother officers, and many of his private friends, besides a few of his father's long-life acquaintances, with a numerous representative of the clergy, and a few of the older upper servants swelled the sad procession. They laid upon his coffin the flag of his regiment, his cap and sword, but all, even the coffin itself seemed swallowed up in magnificent floral wreaths. Behind the first coffin came the second, borne by old Rob, the footman, and Daniel, the head gardener; this also was covered with flowers, flowers glistening with tears. Lady Lyle and her children sent a heart of white lilies, and grandmamma sent a broken harp, and the servants sent a princely tribute, a broken chain of forget-me-nots and roses. It was so said, nothing so touching as those two coffins going together had ever left the stately home of the Deloneys. Old Mr. Deloney, with bowed head, took his place behind the bier; Bishop Dorrain, his ghostly adviser and bosom friend, also old and feeble, stepped to his side. The two aged gentlemen, with slow and ever-slowing steps, moved into the public roadway, and on quietly almost silently to the old family vaults in Friars Bush.

When the procession entered the heavy stone portal of God's acre, the Bishop, halting half an instant to put on his vestments preparatory to reciting the Burial Service, old Mr. Deroney was seen to reel slightly. It was as if his strength deserted him when the Bishop left his side. Sir Percy Lyle who was immediately behind in company with Louis Lamont, for whom Crawford had telegraphed, and Sir Percy had brought into Deloney Hall, took one arm and the young Frenchman the other; thus they went slowly, slowly, to the open grave, the little red house that takes us all without dis-

tinction of creed or class, or age or youth, or poverty or wealth.

Dust-to-dust.

The red sandy clay dropped dull on the silent oak. In the midst of it the old white-haired father, with tears upon his furrowed cheeks, buried his face in his hands; Sir Percy and his new grandson quietly and deftly led him aside, then up the old pathway blooming with early summer growth to the family carriage. They went back to the house with him, and Louis Lamont remained.

All Belfast was in fear. Fear, the most terrible that ever swept a city. Panic had entered not only the homes of the Poor, but the mansions of the Great upon the earth. Those who could afford it were flying for their very lives, far, far from blooming Ireland, beyond the frightful Lues. It was most glorious weather, yet one of the darkest summers that ever burst over Ireland, the terrible year of the Smallpox. It was over the whole country, but especially bad in Ulster. was thought it was introduced at Belfast Port by foreign sailors, but come what way it liked, there was no question of its presence. Little John had been one of the earliest victims, and he had transmitted the disease to his newly-found mother. She was at the point of death; medical skill was wearying itself in her service. It was so sad, a young handsome lady in the very midst of her days blasted with a disease like this; the doctors did their very best, but it seemed hopeless, the disease seemed to gloat upon her, and when other patients seemingly as ill were able to wrestle off the awful thing it fed and festered around her every limb like a loathsome reptile.

One day when Crawford called to inquire he was informed that the patient was at the very lowest ebb. The nurse, after a little hesitation added, "The doctors are afraid that her

sight is gone."

For a second he did not quite grasp the force of the remark, then his strong sad face blenched like a lily. He never knew how he got back that day to his hotel. He had not accepted Sir Percy Lyle's invitation to Lyle Hall, feeling somehow that he would be freer in the hotel. The only consolations he had were his children, they were dearer to him in these days than they had ever been, yet they were always asking for mamma, "Where is dear mamma? Is she never coming back?" They wanted mamma.

The summer days of that sad summer passed slowly and deadly, scarcely a home but could count its vacant chair before the autumn brown was on the trees, faces that had been fondly familiar were marked, altered and strange. Many, many homes never emerged, for the dark deep shadows of that terrible year; many were childless to their dying day, many parentless; the blight was deep and far-reaching.

Molly lay wrestling with the fell plague; slowly, little by little she wriggled out of the death zone. She rallied very slowly, for besides the small-pox, the great mental strain and excitement she had undergone had used up the nerve force in her system; but gradually she came back to herself, and one morning after a long sleepy night she opened her eyes con-

sciously.

She wondered at the quiet room, at the strange aspect of everything, and the strong smell of disinfectants. Where was

she? What could this mean?

Then recollection flashed full and more full upon her. She remembered everything—the strange sense of silence in the hotel, the child of that wild love-storm of her girlhood, in their room; then Denny, Denny, Denny, oh, God, how he had pled with her. Next the death of the boy; then Crawford passing in silence through the room for his revolver; then that long walk up Shankhill, that sweep of familiar country, the solemn mountains with the veins of chalk and glowing whins and homely cabins standing out clearly in the May moonlight and the city sleeping at their feet. That wild passage of words between the two men, then something—quicker than thought swept the whole landscape divided them for ever and settled the dispute for long eternity.

Ah, he had loved her, he had. With his dying hands he had

joined as in a new wedlock Crawford's hand and hers.

Had it been in vain? Had Crawford not relented? Was he after all, still stern and harsh? Why was she here alone in this air quiet room? Where was he? Where were her children? Had he left her—left her alone in Belfast, with nothing but his paltry cheques? She did not know.

When the nurse came in she questioned that low-voiced coolgowned attendant, and learned that she had been very ill, and was now in a private hospital. She dare not ask about her husband, and she lay with her face under the white coverlet engrossed with the subject. The long, slow days of rallying of convalescence trailed in; hers was a painfully slow recovery, but by and by she was able to move about weakly. Still no sign of her husband, not even a message from him. The doctors purposely withheld any information or message, lest the calm of these days should be disturbed. It was clear to them that her mind must not be ruffled with either joy or sorrow until her strength was more assured.

So the days passed in slowest silence. Something began to whisper to her that it was to be thus unto the end. Alone! Alone! Alone! Neither husband, nor home, nor children. The dark of it began to settle upon her, and in that awful desolation, forgive her if her spirit yearned to the dim land where

Denny and his child awaited her.

As yet she was unaware of the ravages the terrible disease

had made upon her person.

She was no longer the woman of other days, her beauty was gone, irrecoverably. The fine contour of the features, the marvellous complexion with its varying apple-like flush, the fine alabaster skin were ruined hopelessly. Even the shining golden hair was not the same; it was splashed now with other hair silver-white. It was a bitter hour when she discovered the truth. She never guessed how intensely proud she had really been of this beauty until she saw herself blighted. She staggered back and fell before the little mirror as if a powerful blow had fallen upon her. The last remaining personal secret joy of her soul was wrung out. She sat by the window in her room, gazing up at the radiant sky where the swallows floated, and the shades of evening mingled into the brilliant prisms of starried summer, stunned. She suffered deeply. and her cry rose up to God in an agony. "Surely, surely, my cup is full."

She was deaf to the entreaties of the nurse to take her evening meal. The doctor passed through and looked; he decided that the point had been reached when her husband would be necessary. He sent immediately for the millionaire. Molly was still sitting suffering, for to a beautiful woman beauty is herself. She was cut to the depths, robbed of something that had been absolutely her own; she realised that from henceforth she would scarcely be as the great bulk of other women, commonplace, but almost repulsive. Voices were at the door. She sat immovable; their voices ceased, the door closed softly,

and a steady even footstep approached; but still she did not move.

" Molly!"

It was the old well-known voice. She started up—he stood before her, so quiet, so calm, so strong. He had come for her to bring her back to himself and to their children. Denny had not joined their hands in vain. Crawford, who had never broken faith with the living, could not break it with the dead. In the sloping shadows of that quiet hospital room he took her in his arms again, but she never knew how bitter the gall he had to drink—how hard to his strong Ulster rigidity was the doing of it; but he was a Belfast Boy, and he did it. They went away together, to part no more.

#### CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE years have come and gone, dimming slightly the ravages of that dire summer. Many were learning patiently the holy lesson that a beautiful character, a lovely soul is more dear in God's sight, aye in man's sight, than a beautiful face. It is a hard truth for most of us, but the patience of the years drives it home. Some whom we knew have gone the way of all flesh—old Mr. Deloney never wholly recovered from the death of his beloved son. Very shortly the vault in Friar's Bush was opened again; his widow, Denny's mother, lingered a few years, her proud spirit broken at last: she dare not rebel at the hand of God, and submitted humbly. Deloney Hall became during the remainder of her life an oratory; altars were set up almost in every room, and Mrs. Deloney devoted herself to religion. Everyone she loved best had passed away, and she made ready to follow them, looking less and less upon this world and things of it.

birthright. He was acknowledged the heir of the family, the one who was to hand down the old patronymic so loved and honoured in Belfast. He lived with her, but the relations between them were never too cordial, because Louis had been trained a Protestant, and would not for family reasons go against his conscience. When the old lady died she bequeathed everything that she could to the Holy Roman Catholic Church,

but the vast entail properties, and the great business devolved

to Louis as the heir-at-law.

The Crawfords moved far away from Belfast; the place became to the millionaire memorious, stifling, unpleasant. He had few associations with the great new city rising up on all sides, and much of that which he had with the old he hoped to put behind his back—to draw the curtain of oblivion closely and securely. He was walking his journey of life very humbly, very reverently, very penitently. The passing years had sapped the fierce passionate anger of those heartrending days of bitterness, cleansed away the excitement; the facts stood clear before him, and in spite of everything he was vexed that he had called Deloney out to his death, out to the field of blood, to that Judgment that overtook him. He regretted it deeply. If pouring out every sixpence of his great wealth could bring back the dark day he would have poured it. He would rather than anything under heaven that he had taken no part—not even that side part—in bringing about that man's awful doom. No word, no hint of these inner sentiments of his soul ever came to his wife. He and she were now much as ordinary married folk. She was Mrs. Crawford, but never Molly. Their old lover days were over. Molly, the love of his boyhood, the sweetheart of his early manhood, the tendril around which the deep full passion of his strength entwined, that Molly was no more. He always turned from the thought, but it lay deep and deep within him, that she, his own old lovely girl had gone away, had been absorbed into the dead man's eyes and heart, been buried in the grave with him: and truly Denny Deloney saw the last of that matchless, marvellous beauty that had enthralled him to his dying hour. Crawford never imagined how dear his wife's beauty had been until he saw her without it. There was still a lingering of something exquisite, a bewitching softness in the shaded melancholy eyes, a poise in the tall graceful figure that were striking, and suggestive of great beauty, but the actual possession had passed away. Her character became steady and calm, her capacity to love increased with the years; never husband had a truer companion, nor children a more devoted mother. She was conscious more or less of the change in Crawford, and she attributed it to that awful time. At first she had grown pale before it, but knowing that she could not alter anything, ignored it, and became proud and happy to go out and in with her noble husband, assimilating into her days this surety, there is something we must leave behind us with every year.

They wandered here and there in many lands, finally coming again to Africa. They journeyed far into the interior, looking upon sights the white traveller has seldom seen. Great mountains lost in heights of snow; magnificent forests of ebony and teak and mahogany through which roamed wild unknown and unnamed beasts; great mineral wealth, enough to make both hemispheres rich; rivers, deep, lustrous and glorious, clotted with fish, and above all hordes and hordes and nordes

of men in their primeval simplicity.

Truly it is a great land, greater than civilisation has ever supposed, greater than the wildest dream the romancer has ever dreamed. As Crawford went about over drift and desert into sun and storm he determined that here would be his home. He wondered could he help the great unnumbered millions; could he bring into their grasp the great riches of their country? Could he strip the mask from their minds and show them they are Men? As ne pondered these things, the utter confusion and profusion of material seemed to block his way, but he thought deeply, his own great wealth that God had put in trust under his hand must not, would never be lavished needlessly upon either himself or his family. He must use it for God, for Humanity. The problem of how puzzled him. At first the idea came to him to develop the wells, the natural spring wells of a given area, gradually to pass on to other areas; then it was explained to him that the people would look with askance at any interference, even for improvements with their wells, so that idea had to be abandoned. thought it would be great if he could bring the water in pipes down from the mountains, as it was in the home countries, to the entire villages under British protection. Upon this subject he consulted many eminent engineers, and although they agreed that the thing could be done-for him, as a private individual, to attempt such an undertaking was folly. Then gradually the truth was forced closer and closer upon him that whatever he undertook for Africa must be directly, entirely, completely under his own control; that no government, no chief, no people must have power to come between him and it. He wondered what it could be. One day as he opened his Bible to read it the line rose up before him with

new intense clarified meaning, "Prepare ye the way of the people, cast up, cast up the highway, gather out the stones."

The words arrested him; in the twinkling of an eye his mission to Africa burst upon his understanding. He took the words literally as they stood, "Prepare you the Way." A road was perhaps the first thing that interior Africa required. He would make the road, a great road from sea to sea. Quickly in his mind a great avenue from the Indian to the Atlantic assumed proportion. He saw the great fields of cotton blooming on either side of it, rich coffee and tea plantations, rich sugar fields, gum and indigo, date orchards, banana trees and cocoa-nuts, tamarinds and gourds, great timber ranches with unlimitable supplies, flower gardens filled with rarest specimens, great gardens of spices, ivories, rubber forests, century shut mines opening to the world their unknown wealth. Alongside these great natural yields of the country sprang up factories, mills, founderies, commercial palaces, bazaars, cattle fairs, fowl markets, egg markets, fisheries, schools, knowledge, order, discipline, churches, everything rising to the mighty march of mingling men. He saw great dockyards adorning the Indian sea-coast, where giant liners from the East could pour their merchandise in exchange for Africa's. He saw the same at the West coast, where the British ships and the American could come with men and machinery to educate the grown-up infant of Africa. Amid the vision and over it rose The Cloud, small as a man's hand, that betokened the coming of The King.

"And who is the King?
What mighty Lord?
The Lord of Hosts and none but He
The King of Glory is."

# CHAPTER XXXVIII. —(CONCLUSION).

CRAWFORD flung himself with his whole energy into this work. He put himself into communication with the best men of the day in Road-Engineering; he had books sent out from England and read assiduously; then he bought a ranch of fifty thousand acres in the Cameroon district, and already the builders were well on with a suitable house for his family. Upon his own land he would turn the first sod, dig out the first

stone of this new road he set to make from sea to sea. It was his intention to keep the road within its own ground, private property, farming the land on either side of it; then to buy up another fifty or hundred acres on a line with the first farm, and so on until he crossed the country. Every sixpence that the farm produced would be sunk into the venture as well as the larger portion of his private fortune. He settled small perpetual annuities on his children, life annunities on his wife, thus freeing as it were his mass of money to devote to his great philanthropic undertaking. He looked forward to the day when he would call a great convocation of the people, when he would say to them: "This is your way, walk you in it."

The years have gone again. The great road across Africa has made progress, sometimes slowly, sometimes more quickly; many difficulties cropped up that had not been anticipated, but still Crawford with the dogged perseverance of the Ulsterman held his purpose and pushed forward. He had now formed a gigantic company, sinking his own fortune fearlessly into it. Sir Percy Lyle was also a shareholder, and so too was Louis Lamont Deloney. The latter had always kept in touch with the family and paid them at least once a year a visit. These visits to Deloney were perfectly charming. He enjoyed the country so much and his friend, and his dear wife. Louis had left some of the old buoyant exuberant spirits behind. As he grew older the resemblance to his forebears stood out clearer and clearer. He repeated little gestures, smiles, play of the features peculiar to those passed hence. A handsomer, more charming, more gentlemanly man, could not be found anywhere. The barest civilities under his potent manipulation approached a compliment—this is a curious trait of some of the oldest and very highest families. Mrs. Crawford often stole a furtive glance at him; his dark thrilling eyes, his raven hair, his low soft voice, in fact for her the entire atmosphere that Deloney's personality created were reminiscent. But as she entered one day into her drawing-room and found the gentleman and her young daughter together, it brought her almost with violence into the present. She was startled, shocked, stupefied. There was something in his face, in his attitude she recognised. For her there was no escaping, no shirking, for she knew that lovelight kindling in his glowing eyes. She had seen it

many many years ago, away in the old country, away up Shankhill when she was a girl. Then that clear May night when his eyes had pierced her to the very quick, heavy with deathless love.

"Madalina, Madalina!"

She seemed to hear him, to see him, to hold his dying hand. The skirts of that unforgotten life seemed to trail beside her. She passed out by the window into the lovely world without, down the gorgeous gardens, and by the artificial waterfall, amid whose fancy cataracts curious little fish sported; out into the soft warm air and away to a clump of young orange trees which Crawford was trying with artificial irrigation to make a success.

She had passed out in silence, but her heart was full. Those two were in Paradise—first Paradise, full of delicious dreams and singing birds and rippling music upon which as yet no

jar had come.

Her heart beat convulsively; she understood keenly. Suddenly she came upon her husband. He was walking up and down slowly, his head upon his chest; he drew her hand within

his arm, they walked so in deep silence.

Mrs. Crawford was unaware that he had been doing so all the morning. Louis Deloney had spoken to him that morning, had revealed his secret, had asked him for his daughter. Louis loved the young girl, but as yet no hint from him had broken the delicious innocence of her unawakened soul. He would have called himself a scoundrel if he had dared speak one word without the permission of her honoured father.

The request struck Crawford to the very core. In the first moment the old Adam so hard to kill in the best of us rose up fiercely within him; a heavy flush of sullen scarlet flamed into his sunburned cheek, the impulse to strike the man quivered in his bosom. He felt as if he had been insulted deeply and pointedly, but he controlled himself and murmuring some half indistinct promise about letting him know he quitted the room hastily. It had been a very hard morning with him, a very bitter one. The old sore opened again. The idea would not leave him that these people blighted him. Now, when he thought he was quit of them for ever, here, this man was coveting his child. Oh, God. How could he ever give her to a Deloney, no matter what his character or

position? Fate was cruel; she was demanding more than he could pay. The Past swept about him with her black shadow. The memory of the wild anger that surged within his bosom, which, but for the intervention of a Higher Power, might have borne him on to blood. He regretted that night's tryst again and again. The thought stood before him that he brought Deloney out for God to kill him; he shuddered and fancied the tragedy might not have been so awful if he had shot him himself. Louis' request ripped the whole matter up. Crawford was battling with it when his wife joined him. He told her in simple words.

Mrs. Crawford grew weak, and her eyes fell before her husband's; she had seen the love burning in Deloney's eves, and was scarcely surprised; yet something in the idea hurt her

"What do you say to it?" asked her husband slowly.
"She is too young," she breathed weakly.
"Nay," he urged; "That is not the question. It is the man himself."

She drew her breath hard, then her clear eyes looked into

"Willie, I leave it entirely with yourself."

They paced slowly up and down, a deep, deep, pause between them. The man's heart trembled, he felt as if cold steel was ripping and taking out the sweet, unsullied glowing flower nestling there.

"Oh, my God," he moaned, "I have tried to carry my cross; ask me to bear no more."

His wife throbbed with deepest emotion. She, who knew Christ, who had felt betimes His nearness so keenly that the actual presence had seemed to overpower her, longed to speak to her husband, who never ventured near the sacred subject of his relation to God.

Presently she said softly:

"He carried His Cross too: nevertheless, the cold steel of the Roman soldiers found His heart. The servant is not greater than his Lord. He who would walk the High Path of the Master must face the finish as bravely as the start."

Crawford trembled; verily he was no greater and much less;

vet he shrank and shrank before this final sacrifice.

They walked on again, both deeply perturbed. Then the best that was in him began to assert itself. The gentleman pleased him in every way save that fatal family to which he belonged. To the Belfast Boy it was almost an insuperable barrier, yet he reasoned with himself, and remembering with returning courage that the Past was dead, that the Future was too precious and too pure to stain with one backward blackening glance, he made up his mind to play the noble part, to be a man, to do unto others as he would be done by; even as his Master told him. His great strong heart grew lightsome and at peace when at evening time he told his wife he kissed her fondly.

"I will do it," he said gently," and it shall be best for us—you and I—as the days pass on. Our life henceforth is

Before.''

Preparations for the wedding went on briskly, for Deloney wished to take his bride home with him. In the midst of the fuss a letter came from Master William—who was staying at Lyle Park, Belfast, studying medicine at the Queen's College—that, subject to his father's approval, he would like to become engaged to Vevee Lyle. It was curious that both of his children went to those families for their partners. Such is life; we do as did our people in earlier days. Everything is the same, save the differing date and differing surroundings.

Time passed on; Crawford sank himself more and more in his great work. His wife helped him loyally, studying charts, suggesting, elevating by her presence the great herds of men upon the estate. She had also work of her own which she carried on with great zest, sewing classes, baking classes, Sunday school and day school classes; these were taught by Irish National School teachers, whom she brought out speci-

ally and superintended herself.

One fine young man was manager for her—we met him before, Little Ned, the arab. Mrs. Crawford had sought him out and put him into the position. His feeling towards his patroness was one of almost reverence. Education had altered somewhat his ambitions—and even if it had not, he would have surrendered all to obey her, to be near her who had done so nobly by him in the old days.

Everything about them went on successfully, and Mrs. Crawford was thinking seriously of opening on the slopes of one of the great mountains a Sanatorium. There was no question that as a health resort the hill climate and the hill

district were unequalled. But while the matter was upon the tapis a request came from Ireland from her daughter

asking her to come to her for an important occasion.

She was in a strait, for she did not like the thought of leaving her husband, and yet she wished to be with her daughter. Finally, it was arranged that he should go. Crawford accompanied her the whole of the interior journey, and saw her safely on board the steamer.

As he turned homeward, the sense of aloneness struck at his heart; in the whole vast continent he had neither both nor

kın.

He sank into a deep reverie; his earliest days rose up before him. He saw himself a young lad setting off down the Glencairn Road, over the Shankhili across the city to the Island looking for work. He recalled the gafter putting his hand upon his head, calling him "the foine bhoy," and bidding him "turn in" in the morning. The throbbing joy of that moment had never during his life been surpassed. The long way home seemed but one step, so great was the gladness of his heart. His old 'prentice days, when he trudged happy and lightsome up the Shankhill every morning and night came up; then Molly loomed larger and larger upon the horizon, his deep, strong attachment for her filled the following years almost to the exclusion of every other thing.

He thought on and on into the shadow of that darkness; then onward, outward, until the present moment when he realised himself alone on the foot track of the dark continent absolutely alone save for his negro attendant. Softly, sweetly like an echo of heaven, the inner consciousness of One whose love surpasseth that of women, Who sticketh closer than a brother, rang in his bosom. It is a great love, the Love of God for men; it lasts while everything else wears dull and done—never alone, never afraid, never sad. He rode onward, his eye brightening, his lip smiling, his countenat reframing, in every vein pulsed warmer and warmer the resolve to carry on THE PEOPLE'S ROAD, knowing that that way was also the Lord's Way. A proud boy was he to have a hand at making it. He wondered what he would name this great immense Avenue that would open up Africa not only to Herself, but to the world. His mind still hankering with his early life, fastened around the old loved road at home in Belfast, where as a carpenter and a working man he had lived, he decided to call this road, which was to be the work of his life, after the one in the old country. When he reached home he took out pen and paper and wrote a little note. It was very simple and very definite and addressed to his solicitors. He sealed it, and locked it in his safe. The message that it contained was that when the road was completed it was to be named "THE SHANKHILL ROAD."

Mrs. Crawford travelled with all speed; a curious mingling of emotions thrilled her as the carriage neared the front door of Deloney Hall. She had heard of the ancestral mansion—she could think of it only as Denny's home. Somehow her mind could not associate it with her daughter or her daughter's home.

Presently she was in the grand drawing-room; her eyes

sought out the magnificent statuary.

Often he had told her of it—had told her she was twice as fair. The statue was still beautiful, beautiful as ever, but, alas, she was no longer like it. As she stood gazing at it it seemed impossible that she could ever have been like it; then she remembered that Youth had passed, and, in that passing Beauty had crept under his wing; but Life with her warm issues was still circling round her breast, and by and by when a new-born infant was put into her arms her heart beat strong and sure, knowing that new love, new sweetness, new joy were come to cast a glamour over the Past and over the Future.

One day as she nursed the little one the question of its name cropped up. The child's father said quietly, yet with a thrill of pride, "there is only one name in the world for

him-William Crawford."

"If you call him after my husband I shall steal him," said Molly, and she kept her word and took her daughter and the baby back with her to Africa. Later on, when Mrs. Deloney left for home the little child with his dimples and his smiles, and his sparkling dark eyes remained to bring new poetry and joy and love into the far away home of The Belfast Boy.







